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FOUR FRENCHWOMEN

BY

AUTHOR DOBSON

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To my Friend

BRANDER MATTHEWS

PREFATORY NOTE.

AMONG reasons for reprinting these papers, two chiefly may be mentioned, — one, that they were originally planned for publication in book-form; the other, that by re-issuing them now, the author has been enabled to give them the revision of which, from lapse of time, they stood in need.

It may be objected that the Princess de Lamballe was, by birth, an Italian. But by her marriage, by the more important part of her life, and above all by her tragic death, she belongs to the country of her adoption.

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MADEMOISELLE DE CORDAY.

1768-1793.

"*Comprendre, c'est pardonner.*"

MADAME DE STAËL.

Ah! judge her gently, who so grandly erred,
So singly smote, and so serenely fell;
Where the wild Anarch's hurrying drums are heard,
The frenzy fires the finer souls as well.

FOUR FRENCHWOMEN.

I.

PARIS streets have had their changes. If, now-a-days, you want the Rue des Cordeliers, you must ask for the Rue de l'École de Médecine, and even between these two the place has been three times christened. In the room of the old Grey Friars church has sprung up a spacious college; where once, in the silent convent-garden, the flat-foot fathers shuffled to and fro, crowds of students now swarm daily to the dissecting-rooms. Peaceful professors dilate leisurely on the circulation of the blood where once, in the hall of the erst-famous club, Danton flashed suddenly into a furious eloquence, or Marat cried for "heads." The serge and three-knot girdle have yielded to the scalpel and the saw.

Nearly a century ago, there lived in the Rue des Cordeliers one who had made himself a

power in France. Long before the tocsin first sounded in 1788, this man — half dwarf, half maniac, foiled plagiarist and *savant manqué*, prurient romancer, rancorous libeller, envious, revengeful, and despised — had heaped up infinite hatred of all things better than himself. "Cain in the social scale," he took his stand upon the lowest grade, and struck at all above him with dog-like ferocity, with insatiable malignity. Champion of the *canaille*, he fought their battles, and the "common cry of curs" was his. Denounced to the Constituent Assembly, hunted by the Paris Commune, besieged in his house by Lafayette; shielded by Danton; hidden by Legendre; sheltered by the actress Fleury; sheltered by the priest Bassal; proscribed, pursued, and homeless, he still fought on, and the publication of *L' Ami du Peuple* was not delayed for a single hour. By the name that he had conquered, all Paris knew him. Woe to the noble who was "recommended" by the remorseless "People's Friend!" Woe to the *suspect* who fell into the clutches of that crafty "Prussian Spider!" Day after day he might be seen at the Convention, — cynical, injurious, venomous; dressed in a filthy shirt, a shabby, patched surtout, and ink-stained velvet smalls; his hair knotted tightly with a thong, his shoes tied

carelessly with string. Men knew the enormous head and pallid, leaden face; the sloping, wild-beast brows and piercing, tigerish eyes; the croaking, "frog-like mouth;" the thin lips, bulged like an adder's poison-bag, — men knew the convulsive gestures, the irrepressible arm with its fluttering proscription list, the strident voice that cried incessantly for "heads,"— now for five hundred, now for five hundred thousand. All Paris knew the triumvir Marat, who, in concert with Robespierre and the Mountain, was slowly floating France in blood.

It is easy, from the abundant records, to construct the story of his death. In July, 1793, the citizen Marat was ill. For three years he had struggled with a disorder, to which sooner or later he must have succumbed. His physician, although he sedulously attended him, had no hope of saving his life. He had ceased to appear at the meetings of the Convention; Robespierre and Danton had refused him "a head or two." A Jacobin deputation, sent to inquire into his health, reported that they had found their brother Marat occupied unweariedly for the public good. "It is not a malady," said they, "but an indisposition which Messieurs of the Côté Droit will hardly catch. It is a superabundant patriotism pressed and repressed

in too small a body. The violent efforts that it makes at escape are killing him." In a word, the citizen Marat was dying of disease aggravated by envy, disappointment, and unquenched lust of blood. During the whole of June he had never ceased — with a head frenzied by strong remedial stimulants, with a pen that pain caused to tremble in his hand — to cry feverishly for slaughter. These were, in fact, those "exhalations of a too active patriotism" that were killing the People's Friend.

On the 13th of July, at about half-past seven in the evening, the citizen Marat was sitting in his bath, writing. The citizen certainly affected, perhaps actually enjoyed, the luxury of poverty. A rough board laid across the bath served him for a desk; an unhewn block supported his inkstand. The floor was littered with numbers of his journal, but the room was bare of furniture. A map of France hung upon the wall, together with a brace of pistols, above which was scrawled in large, bold letters, "LA MORT."

By-and-by comes in a young man named Pillet, bringing paper for the printing of *L'Ami du Peuple*, which was done in the author's house. Marat asked him to open the window, approved his account, and sent him away. As he came out there was a kind of altercation between the

portress, who was folding sheets, and a handsome young lady, wearing a dark hat trimmed with green ribbons. She held a fan in her hand, and was complaining, in a singularly clear and musical voice, that she had come a long journey — all the way from Caen — to see the People's Friend. It appeared from the conversation that she had already called that day. "Had he received her note asking for an interview?" The portress scarcely knew, he had so many. At this moment appeared another woman — Simonne Evrard — who, listening to the importunities of the stranger, consented at last to see if Marat would receive her. Marat, who had read her note some twenty minutes previously, answered in the affirmative, and the women showed her in.

It is not exactly known what took place between Marat and his visitor in their ten minutes' interview. According to her after account, he listened eagerly to the news from Caen, taking notes "for the scaffold" the while. He asked for the names of the Girondist deputies then refuged at that place. She gave them, — Guadet, Gorsas, Buzot, Barbaroux, and the rest. "*C'est bien! Dans peu de jours, je les ferai guillotiner tous à Paris.*" His hour had come. Plucked suddenly from her bosom, a bright blade flashed

up, down, and struck him *once* in the chest. A terrible blow for a delicate hand! — under the clavicle, sheer through the lung, cutting the carotid. "*A moi, ma chère amie, à moi!*" he shrieked. The next moment the room was full. The young lady, coming out, was struck down with a chair, and trampled on by the furious women; the guard came pouring in, and down the street the news flew like wildfire that "they were killing the People's Friend."

They lifted out the livid People's Friend, and laid him on his bed. But he had spoken his last. For an instant his glazed eyes turned upon Simonne Evrard, who was weeping at his side, then closed forever. Medical advice arriving post-haste was yet too late. His death had been anticipated by some eight days.

Paris was in consternation. Was this the beginning of some dreadful vengeance upon the patriots, — some deep-laid Federalist conspiracy? They could not tell. Meanwhile, beware of green ribbons, and, above all, honour to the People's Friend. Men meeting each other in the street repeated like an old tragic chorus, "*Il est mort, l' Ami du Peuple! l' Ami du Peuple est mort!*" The Jacobins dressed his bust in crape; the Convention voted him to the Pantheon, where Mirabeau made room for him.

Senators called upon David to paint his death. "*Aussi le ferai-je*," answers he, with a magnificent wave of the arm. Clubs quarrelled for the body; sections squabbled for the heart. An immense concourse conducted him to his grave. Twenty orators spoke over his tomb (decreed by a beautiful spirit of pastoral simplicity to that garden of the Cordeliers "where at evensong he was wont to read his journal to the people"), and scrupled not to link his name with names most sacred. Sculptors were found to carve his features with the glory of the Agonist, — to twist his foul headband into something of semblance to a crown of thorns. His bust became a safeguard for the houses of patriots, his name a name for new-born children. Robespierre grew sick with envy, and was publicly twitted with his jealousy. The citizen Marat was a martyr, and the mob went mad about him.

After a time came the reaction. Some scribbler studying the citizen's voluminous writings discovered a passage advocating monarchy, and straightway announced the fact. "What! Marat — the *People's* Friend — *Marat* a royalist? *Le misérable!*" The rabble rose forthwith, burnt him in effigy, scraped up the ashes, huddled them into an unworthy urn, and hurrying it along with ribaldry and execration, flung it igno-

miniously down a sewer in the Rue Montmartre. And this was the second funeral of the *People's Friend.*

II.

WHILE the shrill voices of the newsvendors — "hoarse heralds of discord" — were crying at Paris street-corners, "*V'là l' Ombre du Patriote Mar-at ! Eloge Funèbre de Mar-at ! Panégyrique de Mar-at !*" — while Adam Lux was furtively placarding her as the Joan of Arc of the Revolution, eager voices were curious concerning the mysterious assassin. "A virago — *à ce qu'il paraît ! Hommasse, garçonnière — n'est-ce pas vrai, Citoyen ?*" A monster, a fury, with crime written in her face. Does n't Capuchin Chabot expressly say a monster ? — "such a one as Nature vomits forth now and then to the mischief of humanity." This and more, more energetically expressed. For, as may be seen, the Parisians preferred their criminals in the staring and unmistakable colours of the romantic drama.

By-and-by the gossipers knew all that could be told, and Paris to this day knows little more. They heard that her name was Marie-Anne-Charlotte de Corday d' Armont ; that her father

was a gentleman living at Argentan, of broken means, and crippled with a law-suit; that her life was blameless and her beauty great; that, horrified by the revolutionary excesses, she had conceived the idea of freeing France by killing Marat; that, uncounselled and alone, she had set out from Caen to carry out her project, and to fling away her being in return. These were the undoubted facts of her history. It remains to show how peculiarly her character, education, and surroundings tended to thrust her onward to that last act.

Her father, poor as we have said, had distributed his children amongst his wealthier relations. Marie was assigned to an uncle at Vicques, the Abbé de Corday, who took charge of her education. He taught her to read in an old copy, religiously preserved by himself, of the works of their common ancestor, Corneille. Already, in the pages of the seventeenth century Roman, she found the germ of that republic which became the ideal of her life. For, as she subsequently said, she was a republican long before the Revolution.

Her mother died. Then, at fourteen years of age, she was invited to the Abbaye aux Dames by the abbess, Madame de Belzunce. In those days the itch political — the current

philosophy — had invaded even the solitude of the convents. Her true friends to her — motherless actually, virtually brotherless and fatherless — were her books. To her religious exercises she added long readings, longer reveries. The seed that sprang in Corneille was trained and fostered by her now "favourite authors," Plutarch, Raynal, and the political works of Rousseau. Like Madame Roland, she early began to regret that she had not been born a Cornelia or Paulina, to sigh for the "*beaux jours*" of Sparta and of Rome. The French were not worthy of her republic, with "its austere virtues and its sublime devotion." "Our nation," she said, "is too light, too trifling; it needs retempering, regenerating, — needs to seek in the errors of the past the tradition of the great and true, the beautiful and noble; to forget all those frivolities which beget the corruption and degeneration of a people." The rumours of atrocities — *ça-ira* echoes — which reached her in her quiet retreat filled her with horror and dismay. But while she detested the men of the Revolution, she remained true throughout life to her political theories.

In 1787 Madame de Belzunce died. Later the convents were suppressed. The young girl, after a short visit to her father, sought an asylum

with a cousin, Madame de Bretteville, who, as she quaintly phrased it, did not know her visitor "from Eve or Adam," but nevertheless received her hospitably. Here she remained until her final journey to Paris.

Madame de Bretteville lived in an old, gloomy, semi-Gothic house, called the Grand Manoir. Mlle. de Corday mixed to a slight extent in the Caen society, and more particularly with the royalist family of Faudoas. She was remarked for her beauty and sweetness. She was a good musician, sketched cleverly, and talked with great clearness and brilliancy. Her letters, chiefly running on matters political, were handed about with a certain ostentation by those who received them. At this time she had many admirers, — men who, years after, trembled when they heard her name, a voice like hers; but her aversion to marriage was well known. An anecdote related by her friend, Madame Loyer de Maromme, will bring her before the reader.

Some of Madame de Bretteville's friends were leaving Caen, and before their departure she gave them a farewell dinner. Among the guests was a M. de Tournélis, a cousin of Marie, who regarded her with no slight admiration. The dinner passed off well until the king's health was proposed. Mlle. de Corday remained un-

moved. "What," said a lady, touching her elbow, "you won't drink the king's health, — the king, so good, so virtuous?" "I believe him virtuous," she returned in her low, sweet tones, "but a weak king cannot be a good one; he cannot check the misfortunes of his people." A dead silence succeeded this reply; the health was nevertheless drunk, and the company sat down, visibly ill at ease.

A few moments after, the new bishop, Fauchet, made his entry into Caen, escorted by a triumphal procession crying — "*Vive la Nation! Vive l'Evêque Constitutionnel!*" M. de Tournélis and M. de Corday, jun., exasperated, attempted to answer by cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" and were with great difficulty restrained from doing so. M. de Corday silenced his son, and Marie pulled M. de Tournélis to the back of the room.

"How is it," said she to the imprudent gentleman, whose arm she still held, "how is it that you are not afraid of risking the lives of those about you by your intemperate manifestations? If you would serve your country so, you had far better not go away."

"And why, mademoiselle," he returned impetuously, "why did *you* not just now fear to wound the feelings of *your* friends by refusing

to join your voice to a toast so French, and so dear to all of us?"

"*My* refusal," she replied, smiling, "can only injure *me*. But you, without any useful end, would risk the lives of all about you. On whose side, tell me, is the most generous sentiment?"

My refusal can only injure me. Springing, perhaps, at first, from her solitary meditations; growing daily as she daily learns new details of the excesses of the time, for during a two years' space, she reads some five hundred pamphlets; fortified by the indignant protest which "her master," Raynal, addressed to the Constituent Assembly, — the ruling idea of Marie de Corday had become a complete detachment from her individual existence, — a desire to offer up her life, if her life could be useful to her country. "What fate awaits us?" writes she to Madame de Maromme. "A frightful despotism. If they succeed in curbing the people, 'tis to fall from Charybdis into Scylla; on every side we suffer. . . . One can die but once; and what consoles me for the horror of our situation, is that *no one will lose in losing me*." Later, writing to Mlle. Rose Fougeron du Fayot of this terrible news of the king's death (1793), she says that if she could, she

would fly to England. "But," she adds, "*God holds us here for other destinies.*" The idea was there, without the name. The arrival of the proscribed Girondists at Caen found her ripe for the execution of her scheme.

The struggle between the Mountain and the Gironde had drawn to the close. The Montagnards had accused the Girondists of conniving with the foreigner. Guadet had replied by a counter-charge against Marat, and Marat was sent to that revolutionary tribunal which he himself had instituted. Judges and jury rose *en masse*, and, without more to-do, declared him innocent. A mob formed on the spot crowned him with oak, and, led by a sapper named Rocher, brandishing his axe, carried him on their shoulders to the Convention, before which they defiled, according to custom, subsequently dancing the *carmagnole*, deputies, sapper, and all. This triumph of Marat was the death-knell of the Gironde. Soon after, the twenty-two deputies were proscribed, and some eighteen of them took refuge at Caen.

The arrival of the discarded senators was hailed with enthusiasm by Marie de Corday. These were republicans after her own heart, — latter-day Romans, disciples of Brutus. They would save the country from its miserable assas-

sins, restore the peace of which she dreamed. The petition of a friend lent her a pretext for introducing herself to Barbaroux. With the "Antinoüs of Marseilles" (grown at this time excessively fat and cumbrous, by the way) she had numerous interviews, lengthy discussions upon the position of affairs. It is probable that in these last her project took its definite shape. The Girondist orator painted to her, as he well knew how to do, that sanguinary Montagnard triumvirate, — the remorseless and terrible Danton; Robespierre, cunning as a Bengalee, cruel as a tiger; Marat, the jackal of the guillotine, nauseous, ignoble, and drunk with blood, — Marat, too, who had compassed their downfall. Mlle. de Corday's choice was made. That choice, however, she kept a secret. All knowledge of her intent was subsequently strenuously denied by the deputies who knew her while at Caen.

The Girondists had hoped to organise a counter-revolution, — to form a departmental army to march upon Paris, and insure the safety of the Convention; but the business languished. "Unwearied orators, incorrigible Utopists," inconsequent democrats, — they were voices, and nothing more. Puisaye had gathered two thousand men at Evreux; Wimpffen called for the

volunteers at Caen. *Seventeen* men quitted the ranks. The sight of this devoted little band only served to strengthen the purpose of Mlle. de Corday. "A woman's hand should check the civil war," she said; "a woman's hand *prepare the peace.*" She had already procured a passport for Paris, already bade adieu to her friends, and two days after, she left for the capital.

None, we say, knew of her intent. Her ostensible purpose was the serving of an old convent friend, for whom Barbaroux had interested himself. Long after her death, little anecdotes cropped up which show her inflexible decision. Passing through the shop of the carpenter Lunel, on the ground-floor of the Grand Manoir, she suddenly, to the astonishment of the good man, who was playing cards with his wife, broke out into an involuntary "No; it shall be never said that a Marat reigned over France!" and struck the table sharply with her hand. Her books she distributed, keeping perhaps an odd volume of Plutarch out of all. To the carpenter's son, Louis Lunel, she gave her portfolio and her crayon-holder, bidding him not to forget her, as he would never see her more. When saying good-bye to one of her friends, she kissed the son, a boy of sixteen or thereabouts.

M. Malfilâtre grew up to be a man; and when he died, as late as 1851, he still remembered with pride the last kiss that Marie de Corday ever gave on earth.

Then comes the anecdote of M. de Lamartine, which is at least *ben trovato*. Fronting the Grand Manoir lodged a family named Lacouture. The son of the house, a skilful musician, was used to practise regularly in the mornings at his piano. He had noticed that whenever he began to play, his opposite neighbour thrust open her shutters, and sat sometimes half-hidden by the curtain, and apparently listening to the music. Encouraged by the daily apparition of the lady, the musician never failed to play, — Marie never to fling open the shutters. This went on regularly up to the day which preceded her departure for Paris. That day she opened, then closed the shutters suddenly and sharply. On the morrow, they remained obstinately shut. Slowly the notes stole out upon the air, but the dark casement showed no sign. Thus the musician knew that his listener was gone.

III.

THERE are two trustworthy portraits of Mlle. de Corday. The one, attributed to Siccardi, and preserved at Caen, represents a magnificent young woman of three-and-twenty, in all the exuberance, all the omnipotence of youth and beauty, — strong and yet graceful, elegantly natural, modest above all, and still of a compelling presence. Her hair, of a beautiful chestnut tinge, escapes from the fluttering laces of her Norman cap, and falls in torrents on the white, close-drawn kerchief about her shoulders. Her eyes were grey and somewhat sad, shaded by deep, dark lashes. Her brows were finely arched, her face "a perfect oval," and her complexion "marvellously brilliant." "She blushed very readily, and became then, in reality, charming." Add to these a strangely musical voice, singularly silvery and childlike, and an expression of "ineffable sweetness," and you may conceive something of that Marie de Corday whom men loved at Caen.

The other, painted by Hauer in her cell, and wearing originally the red shirt of the murderess, is that Charlotte Corday of the Conciergerie whom death is nearing quickly, stride

on stride. White-robed, white-capped, the figure is peaceful, statuesque, and calm. Something, perhaps, of severity sits upon the features; something, perhaps, of sorrow in the eyes. Not sorrow for the deed; rather the shadow of her long-nursed purpose, — the shadow of those long, lonely hours in the Grand Manoir; the shadow of that loveless, hopeless, endless woman's life she values at so little. For herself she is perfectly at ease. *Her* duty done, what remains the rest may do. *She* has *prepared the peace.* She had done "*a thing which should go throughout all generations to the children of the nation.*"

Peace — "the *Peace*" — is her paramount idea. Her famous letter, written ostensibly to Barbaroux, but in reality her political *Apologia*, is dated the *Second day of the Preparation for Peace*, "*Peace* at all price," she writes, "must be procured." "For the last two days she has enjoyed a delicious *peace.*" There is a certain forced gaiety — a calculated flippancy — an affectation of stoicism about this manifesto which is well-nigh painful. Yet she cannot wholly disguise the elevation of the heroine, who feels "no fear of death," who "values life only as it can be useful to her kind." This letter, begun at the Abbaye, finished at the Conciergerie, was never

delivered. In far simpler and far more touching words she takes leave of her father:—

Pardonnés-moi mon Cher papa d'avoir disposé de mon Existance sans votre permission, Jai vengé bien d'innocentes victimes, jai prevenu bien d'autres désastres, le peuple un jour desabusé, se rejouira dêtre delivré d'un tyrran, Si j'ai cherché a vous persuadé que je passais en angleterre, cesque jesperais garder lincognito mais jen ai reconu limpossibilite. Jespere que vous ne serés point tourmente en tous cas je crois que vous auriés des defenseurs a Caën, jai pris pour defenseur Gustave Doulcet, un tel attentat ne permet nulle defense Cest pour la forme, adieu mon Cher papà je vous prie de moublier, ou plutôt de vous rejouir de mon sort la cause en est belle, J'embrasse ma sœur que jaime de tout mon cœur ainsi qui tous mes parens, n'oubliés pas ce vers de Corneille.

"Le crime fait la honte et non pas l'échafaud."

C'est demain a huit heures que l'on me juge, ce 16 Juillet.

CORDAY.

Corde et ore was the motto of the Armont family. *Corde et ore* before the dark bench of the Salle de l'Egalité, she sustained the deed that she had done. Impossible for the legal catches of President Montané to surprise any

avowal of complicity. Answer after answer comes from her, prompt, to the point, clear-stamped with the image of truth, concise as a couplet of Corneille. Like Judith of old, "all marvelled at the beauty of her countenance." The musical voice seemed to dominate the assembly, — the criminal to sit in judgment on her judges. She had killed Marat for his crimes, — the miseries that he had caused. The thought was hers alone; *her* hatred was enough; she best could execute *her* project. She has killed one man to save a thousand; a villain to save innocents; a savage wild beast to give her country *Peace.* "Do you think, then, to have killed *all* the Marats?" "This one dead, the rest will fear — perhaps." "You should be skilful at the work," says crafty Fouquier-Tinville, remarking on the sureness of the stroke. "The monster! He takes me *for an assassin!*" Her answer closed the debates like a sudden clap of thunder. The reading of her letters followed. "Have you anything to add?" says Montané, as the one to Barbaroux was finished. "Set down this," she returned: "The leader of anarchy is no more; you will have *peace.*" Nothing was left but to demand her head, which the public accuser did at once.

The form of a defence was gone through. She had called upon a friend — the M. Doulcet of the letter to her father; her request had never reached him. Montané named Chauveau de la Garde. But she had confessed everything: there was nothing to say. How could he please her best? When he rose a murmur filled the room. During the reading of the accusation, the judge had bid him plead madness, the jury to hold his tongue. Either plan was contrived to humiliate her. La Garde read in her anxious eyes that she would not be excused. Like a gallant gentleman as he was, he took his perilous cue. "The accused," he said, "avows her crime, acknowledges its *long premeditation*, confesses to all its terrible details. This immovable calm, this entire self-abnegation — *in some respects sublime* — are not in nature. They are only to be explained by that exaltation of political fanaticism which has placed a dagger in her hand. . . . Gentlemen of the jury, I leave your decision to the care of your prudence."

The face of the prisoner filled with pleasure. All fear of that dreadful plea, insanity, was at an end. She heard the sentence unmoved, after which she begged the gendarmes to lead her to La Garde. "Monsieur," she said, "I

thank you warmly for the courage with which you have defended me, in a manner worthy of yourself and of me. These gentlemen" — turning to the judges — "confiscate my goods, but I will give you a greater proof of my gratitude: I ask you to pay my prison debts, and I count upon your generosity." It need hardly be said that the duty was religiously performed.

During the trial she had noticed a person sketching her, and had courteously turned her face towards him. This was Jacques Hauer, an officer of the National Guard. As soon as she returned to the prison, she expressed to the *concierge* a desire to see him. The painter came. She offered in the few minutes that remained to her to give him a sitting, begging him at the same time to copy the portrait for her friends, calmly talking of indifferent matters, and now and then of the deed that she had done. One hour, then half-an-hour, passed away; the door opened, and Sanson appeared with the scissors and the red shirt. "What, already?" she asked. She cut off a long lock of her beautiful hair and offered it to Hauer, saying that she had nothing else to give him, and resigned the rest to the executioner. Her brilliant complexion had not faded, her lips were red as ever.

She still "enjoyed a delicious peace." The crimson shirt added so strangely to her weird beauty that the artist put it in the picture; but, as we have said, it was afterwards painted out. She asked Sanson if she might wear her gloves, showing her wrist bruised by the brutal way in which they had tied her hands. He told her that he could arrange it without giving her pain. "True," said she, gaily, "they have not all your practice."

The cart was waiting outside. When she came out the "furies of the guillotine" greeted her with a howl of execration. But even on these, says Klause, a look of the wonderful eyes often imposed a sudden silence. Calmly she mounted the tumbril, and the horse set out along the road it knew so well. Upright, unmoved, and smiling, she made the whole of the journey. The cart got on but slowly through the dense-packed crowd, and Sanson heard her sigh. "You find it a long journey?" he asked. "Bah!" said she, serenely, with the old musical voice unshaken, "we are sure to get there at last." Sanson stepped in front of her as they neared the scaffold, to hide the guillotine; but she bent before him, saying, "I have a good right to be curious, for I have never seen one."

The red sun dipped down behind the Champs Elysées trees as she went up the steps. The blood rushed to her cheek; the covering on her neck was roughly torn away, and for an instant she stood in the ruddy light as if transfigured. Then, in a solemn silence, the axe fell. A hound named Legros (a temporary aid of Sanson's) lifted up the pale, beautiful head, with all its frozen sweetness, and struck it on the cheek. Report says that it reddened to the blow. But whether it really blushed, whether the wretch's hands were wet with blood, or whether it was an effect of the sunlight, will now be never known. The crowd, by an almost universal murmur, testified its disapprobation. So died Marie de Corday, aged twenty-four years, eleven months, and twenty days. She was buried in the Madeleine, and afterwards removed to the cemetery Montparnasse.

Inseparable from her last hours is the figure of the Mentz deputy and German dreamer, Adam Lux. He saw her on the way to the scaffold, — went mad at the splendid sight, — grew drunk with death. He courted the axe; it was glorious to die with her — for her. In a long, printed eulogium, he proposed that she should have a statue, with the motto, *Greater*

than Brutus. He was tried, sent to the scaffold, and went rejoicing, crying that "now, at last, he should die for the sake of Charlotte Corday."

But although the Mentz deputy glorified the heroine, he did not glorify the deed; nor do we. In the true spirit of that life-maker's motto, to "nothing extenuate, or set down aught in malice," we are bound to condemn her act. Many a voice has been raised in defence of political assassination. For us, the knife makes the crime. Has it not been written,—"Vengeance is *mine*, saith the Lord: *I* will repay"? The sin of Marie de Corday was twofold: sin, as the shedding of blood is sin; sin, as an usurpation of the Right Divine to punish. Nor did the result justify the means. The Hydra of the Terror had other heads than Marat's. He, indeed, was gone; but had the guillotine no jackals in Fouquier-Tinville and Robespierre? Was there no infamous *Père Duchesne* to succeed to the *Ami du Peuple?* Enthusiasm no doubt existed, but for her alone. Her *preparation for Peace* only further inflamed the Revolutionary Tribunal, only hurried swifter to their doom the unfortunate Twenty-two. It lifted Marat into a bloody martyrdom, sent to the

scaffold an unoffending Lauze de Perret, a hapless Adam Lux. Yet while our colder reasons condemn, our warmer hearts excuse. We are free, granting her error, to forgive its mistaken motive, free to admire her unselfish devotion and the sublimity of her end.

MADAME ROLAND.

1754-1793.

"*Une femme qui était un grand homme.*"

LOUIS BLANC.

"Elle avait l'âme républicaine dans un corps pétri de grâces et façonné par une certaine politesse de cour."

RIOUFFE. *Mémoires d'un Détenu.*

MADAME ROLAND.

I.

IN the fall of 1863, a young man called upon a bookseller of the Quai Voltaire with a bundle of dusty documents under his arm. "They had been his father's; they were nothing to him: what would Monsieur give for them?" Monsieur, looking over them, does not think them very interesting, and declines to bid for the treasure. "But," says the young man, "there are others," and on two successive occasions he appears with more yellow manuscripts. Finally the bookseller offers fifty francs for the whole. "Fifty francs be it, then!" And the heaps being shaken, sorted, and arranged, are found to include memoirs of the Girondists Louvet and Pétion; autograph of the Girondist Buzot; tragedy of Charlotte Corday, by the Girondist Salles; and, best of all, *five* letters of the famous Madame Roland.

Stranger still, this discovery was closely connected with another made some months before, in March. A *savant*, well known for his

revolutionary researches, prowling about in the market at Batignolles, had happened upon the miniature of a man, in sad dilapidation, and dragging on the ground among a heap of vegetables. Its glass had gone, its canvas had curled and cracked ; but behind the picture was a piece of folded paper, cut to the size of the portrait, and covered closely with Madame Roland's well-known writing. These two discoveries, taken in connection with each other, clasped at once the hands of two hitherto unrecognised lovers, and settled forever a question which had been often asked, but never answered until then.

Love in the earlier years of Madame Roland had assumed a curious disguise. He had appeared to her in the cap and gown of a schoolman, and had left his heart behind in the hurry of packing. Self-educated and secluded, she had ranged all literature, learning to read in Plutarch, graduating in Rousseau, — and both had left their marks. Handsome, ardent, affectionate, and sensitive, she had, nevertheless, listened to the voice of her imagination and the echoes of her studies until she had forgotten her feelings. Love for her had become a matter of stoical calculation ; marriage a prudent philosophical bargain, to be controlled by a

maxim of the Portico, a quotation from *Emile*. At twenty-five she had married — always *en philosophe* — a staid, stiff man of five-and-forty, an inspector of manufactures at Lyons, who became a minister at Paris, and scandalised the court by his Puritan costume, his round hat, and the strings in his shoes. Him she had aided, elevated, and afterwards eclipsed. Thrown suddenly into society, then queen of a coterie of young and eloquent enthusiasts, dreaming dangerously of being "the happiness of one and the bond of many," she had early discovered that "among those around her there were some men whom she might *love*;" and although she strictly obeyed the dictates of duty, it was shrewdly suspected that the some one had been found. Who was it? Who was the "*toi que je n'ose nommer*" of her memoirs? What passion was this from which her riper years so narrowly escaped? Michelet and Sainte-Beuve had touched the traces of a hardly-conquered inclination for Bancal des Issarts. But who could it be? Was it Barbaroux, the "Antinoüs of Marseilles?" Was it Bosc the devoted, Lanthenas the friend of the family? Was it Buzot? It *was* Buzot. The letters were to Buzot, the portrait was Buzot's, and the riddle was solved. Already clearly

drawn by her own faithful pencil, the great truth-teller Time had added the completing touches. No longer darkly seen, the stately figure stands out upon the threshold of the Revolution, secure in its singular nobility, with all its errors undisguised, and makes "appeal to impartial posterity."

When, in Molière's play, the learned (and intolerable) M. Thomas Diafoirus pays his court to Mlle. Angélique, he politely presents her with an elaborate thesis *against* the circulation of the blood, *pour faire son chemin*. In 1790 the successful suitor came laden with the *Contrat Social* in his pocket, or to-morrow's declamation in his hand. On that high road to ladies' favour the surest passport was some florid philippic against Robespierre or Marat, some high-pitched prospectus of the approaching "Reign of Reason." Politics had invaded all the *salons*, driving before them the sonnets and *bouts-rimés*, effacing the *éclat* of the Dorats and Bernis. From the crowded court where Madame de Staël swayed the sceptre, to its faintest provincial copy, whose "inferior priestess" fired her friends with her enthusiasm and burnt her fingers with her tea, the political spirit had swept down all before it.

Arrived in the capital in 1791, Madame

Roland, already in her Lyons retreat a decided republican, already a contributor to the patriot journal of her friend Champagneux, already in correspondence with the all-pervading Brissot, flung herself headlong into the popular current. Her house at Paris became a rendezvous for Brissot's friends. The elegant hostess, who, silent at first in the animated discussions, only showed her scorn or her sympathy by a sudden elevation of the brows, a glance of the speaking eyes, became the "Egeria" of the gathering Gironde. The little third-floor of the Hôtel Britannique, Rue Guénégaud, became a very grotto of the Camenæ. Round her — centre and soul of the coalition — flocked its famous and ill-fated leaders. Here nightly was to be seen that journalist adventurer Brissot, its hand as she was its head; here, too, came the unknown lover Buzot, "heart of fire and soul of iron," drinking a perilous eloquence in those beautiful eyes; here, too, even Danton, even Robespierre, made fitful apparitions, and, conspicuous among the rest, might be distinguished the "grave" Pétion, the philosopher Condorcet, and last but not least, her husband, the "virtuous" Roland.

Hardly to be detached, therefore, from the story of the Girondists, are the later years of

Madame Roland's life. But our concern, at present, lies more with the woman than the politician—more with Marie-Jeanne, or Manon Phlipon the engraver's daughter, than the all-conquering wife of the popular statesman. Historically, perhaps, a few words are necessary. First a commissioner to the National Assembly (1791), then Minister of the Interior under Dumouriez (1792), Roland was materially influenced, ably aided, by his wife. When Louis XVI. refused to sanction the decree for the banishment of the priests, the minister, using his wife's pen, addressed to the king a remonstrance which procured his dismissal.

The Faubourg St. Antoine rose, the king was removed to the Temple, and Roland was recalled. Loudly and ineffectually he protested against the savage September massacres in the prisons. Then the pair became objects for the enmity of the terrible Montagne. Madame Roland was charged with corresponding with England. The address and dexterity of her defence baffled her opponents, Danton and Robespierre. At last Roland was arrested, but escaped. His wife was thrown into the Abbaye, liberated, re-arrested, and taken to St. Pelagie; thence to the Conciergerie, and thence, on November 8th, 1793, to the guillotine.

During her imprisonment she wrote her personal memoirs (which she was not able to complete), *Notices Historiques* of her political circle, *Portraits et Anecdotes*, and the five letters to Buzot which have already been mentioned.

II.

THERE are many reasons which render these "confidences," as they have been called, singularly genuine and authentic. Like many of the records of that time, they were written under the axe. At such a moment, to palter with posterity — to mince and simper to the future — were worse than useless. With the beautiful Duchess of Gramont, who was asked whether she had helped the emigrants, the authors seem to say, "I was going to answer 'No,' but life is not worth the lie." And one and all, writing in the shadow of death, catch something of sublime simplicity. In the present case there are other reasons still. When Madame Roland planned her memoirs she was thinking of the greatest work of her great model, Rousseau. "These," she said to a friend, "will be *my* 'Confessions,' for I shall conceal nothing." A mistaken idea, perhaps, but one which lends an

additional value to the words. Lastly, we have in them the first rapidly-conceived expression, the accent, as it were, of her soul. As she hurries on, driven by inexorable haste, now, at some prison news, breaking into a patriotic defence of her defeated party, now again seeking peace in the half-light of her childish memories, now listening to the supper-table clamour of the actresses in the next cell, now in a sudden panic tearing off the completed MS. to send to Bosc, who will hide it in a rock in the forest of Montmorency, one experiences all the charm of an intimate conversation; one feels that these papers are, so to speak, proof impressions of her state of mind. Composed with all the easy fluency and something of the naïve cultivation of Sévigné, they were scribbled furtively, under the eye of a gaoler, on coarse grey paper procured by the favour of a turnkey, and often blotted with her tears. The large quarto volume of MSS. is still in existence. Its fine bold writing is hardly corrected, never retouched. The writer had no time for erasure, revision, or ornament, and barely time to tell the truth.

Manon Phlipon hardly recollects when she first learned to read. But from the age of four she reads with excessive avidity, devouring everything with a perfect rage for study. Rising at

five, when all is quiet in the house, she slips on her little jacket, and steals on tiptoe to the table in the corner of her mother's room, there to repeat and prepare her lessons for the patient master whom she nicknamed M. *Doucet.* She is never without a book. Now it is the Bible, or the *Lives of the Saints;* now Telemachus, or the *Memoirs of Mlle. de Montpensier;* now the *Recovery of Jerusalem*, or the *Roman Comique* of Scarron. Tasso and Fénélon set the child-brain on fire; as she reads she realises. "I was Erminia for Tancred, and Eucharis for Telemachus." Plutarch so captivated her at nine that she carried him to church instead of mass-book. Nothing is too dry; "she would have learnt the Koran by heart if they had taught her to read it;" she astonishes her father by her knowledge of heraldry; even tries the *Law of Contracts;* and, later still, sets to and copies out a treatise on geometry — plates and all.

Nor was this one of the pale little prodigies whose intellect has been developed at the expense of their physique. Manon had excellent health, and these are not all her accomplishments. This child, who read serious books, explained the circles of the celestial sphere, handled crayon and burin, and was at eight the best dancer in a party of children older than

herself — this child was quite at home in the kitchen. "I should be able to make my soup as easily as Philopœmen [in her favourite Plutarch] cut his wood; but no one would imagine that it was a duty fitted for me to perform." There is a secret in that last sentence which may be safely recommended to housekeepers *in posse*.

In those days, perhaps more than now, a first communion was a great event in a child's life. At eleven years of age her religious studies have so mastered her, that with tears in her eyes she begs her parents "to do a thing which her conscience demands, to place her in a convent," in order to prepare for it. It is all here. She has charmingly painted her convent friends — the *colombe gemissante*, Sister Agatha, the Sisters Henriette and Sophie Cannet (her correspondence with whom — from 1772 to 1786 — is "the origin of her taste for writing"), the convent life, a *fête*, and the installation of a novice.

With the *Dames de la Congrégation* she stayed a year. A succeeding year was spent with her grandmother in the Ile St. Louis. The little household is pleasantly touched in; her grandmother — brisk, amiable, and young at sixty-five; her grandmother's sister, Mademoiselle Rotisset, pious, asthmatic, always seriously

knitting, and everybody's servant. Then she describes her visit to a great lady, whose airs and patronage disgust the little republican who has already begun to reason shrewdly upon nobility of intellect and questions of degree.

"'*Eh!' bonjour,*' said Madame de Boismorel in a loud, cold voice, and rising at our approach. '*Bonjour*, Mademoiselle Rotisset.' (Mademoiselle? What! My *bonne maman* is here Mademoiselle?) 'Well, I am glad to see you; and this pretty child is your grandchild, eh? Ah, she will improve. Come here, *mon cœur* — here, next me. She is timid. How old is she, your grandchild, Mademoiselle Rotisset? She is a little dark, but the base of the skin is excellent; 't will clear before long. She 's already well shaped. You should have a lucky hand, little woman; have you ever put into the lottery?'

"'Never, madame; I don't like games of chance.'

"'I believe you; at your age one expects to be certain. What a voice! how sweet and full it is! But how grave we are! Are n't you a wee bit *dévote*?'

"'I know my duties, and I try to fulfil them.'

"'Capital! You want to be a nun, don't you?'

"'I ignore my destiny; I don't yet seek to determine it.'

"'Bless me, how sententious! She reads, your grandchild, Mademoiselle Rotisset?'

"'It is her greatest pleasure; she reads half the day.'

"'Oh, one can see that; but take care that she does n't become a blue-stocking — 't would be a thousand pities.'"

Thereupon the elder ladies fell to talking of their little maladies — of Abbé This and Councillor That — and, in order to sprinkle the sprightly conversation with the requisite spice of scandal, of a certain beauty somewhat "on the return," whose misfortune it is to forget everything except her age. Meanwhile Mademoiselle Manon, perched on the edge of her seat, feels very hot and uncomfortable, and sorely disconcerted by the cold boldness of the great lady's eyes which stare at her every now and then over her plastered cheeks. The proud little student of Plutarch, mutely measuring herself with her entertainer, sickens at her patronage and assumption of superiority, as later she will sicken at "that lank yellow hackney," Mademoiselle de Hannaches, whose pretensions to pedigree are everywhere respected — as later she will sicken at the obsequious mummeries

of Versailles. She has already the germ of all that fierce hatred of royalty which was so unworthy of her; and although in the memoirs she has doubtless clothed her recollections with something of the amplitude of her maturer style, the picture in feeling is vividly true. For the Manon of the visit and the chronicler of later years are not at all unlike. Her character was of a composition that hardens early, and between the child of twelve and the woman of forty the difference is not so great.

When at last she returned to her parents, Mademoiselle Phlipon was a handsome girl — well-nigh a woman. She has no plan or aim but knowledge and instruction. "For me happiness consists in application." "The mornings," she writes to Sophie Cannet, "slip away somehow in reading and working. After meals I go into my little study overlooking the Seine. I take a pen, dream, think, and write." Elsewhere she says, "My violin, my guitar, and my pen are three parts of my life." In this way, and with a little gardening, the quiet days glide on, varied only by a Sunday jaunt to lonely Meudon, "with its wild woods and solitary pools," or by the rarer visit to friends.

In this quiet retirement her character is forming fast. Doubt begins to trouble her. Her con-

fessor, somewhat alarmed, hastens to provide her with all the apologists of her faith; from these she learns the names of its assailants, and procures them too. An endless course! Philosopher and politician — Voltaire and Diderot, Descartes and Malebranche, the *System of Nature* and the *Treatise on Tolerance* — she reads them all. She writes, too, *Œuvres de Loisir* and *Divers Reflections,* little tracts on love and liberty. And as she was Eucharis for Telemachus, so with each author she is successively — perhaps all at once — Jansenist, Cartesian, Stoic, Deist, and Sceptic.

Rousseau comes at last as the choice dish — the peacock's brains — of this mixed entertainment. Nothing but the Plutarch at nine had captivated her like Rousseau at twenty-one. She has "found her fitting food," she says. "A little Jean-Jacques will last her through the night." She stigmatises as "souls of mud" the women who can read the *Nouvelle Héloïse* without at least *wishing* to be better. Nor was she singular. At every turn of these Revolutionary records one traces the influence of the Genevese philosopher. Now we do not care much about that pseudo-sentiment — for us the windy rhetoric of *St. Preux* is simply illegible — for us *Julie d'Etanges* is a *précieuse ridicule.* If — at

all — we remember that half-crazed genius, that self-indulgent, "self-torturing sophist," it is as the man who wrote pathetically of paternity, and sent his children to the Foundling — as the man who took *Vitam impendere vero* for his motto, and "romanced" like Mendez Pinto — as the man who allowed his theft of a paltry ribbon to ruin a poor girl who loved him, and so forth. Yet it is impossible to estimate the extent of his power over his contemporaries. This opinion of Madame Roland's was the opinion of Madame de Staël — of nearly all the world in those days; and to this influence must be attributed the somewhat declamatory style of the present memoirs; to it, also, the fact that, excellent as they are, they have their undesirable pages.

It is not to be supposed that the handsome young *bourgeoise*, with her natural graces, and with talents far above her class, was without admirers. "All the youth of the quarter," says she pleasantly, and not at all insensibly, "passed in review" without success. Her mother, conscious, perhaps, of her approaching end, is anxious to see her daughter settled. Her father wishes to marry her well, from a pecuniary point of view, and thinks of little else; but mademoiselle has her own model of male humanity, and

it is *not* the neighbouring butcher in his Sunday coat and gala lace. "Have I lived with Plutarch and the philosophers simply to marry a tradesman with whom I have nothing in common?" Marriage she conceives "to be the most intimate union of hearts." Her husband must excel her. Nature and the law give him the pre-eminence; she should blush if he did not deserve it. Nevertheless she will not be commanded. "Ah!" says the quiet mother, "you would conquer a man who did your will and dreamt it was his own." This is, perhaps, the truth.

She has painted some portraits from that unsuccessful throng. There is Monsieur Mignard, "the Spanish Colossus, red-handed as Esau;" Monsieur Mozon, the widower, with the wart on his cheek; the butcher with his lace; Monsieur Morizot de Rozain, who writes *d'assez belles choses*, and gets as far as the third explanatory letter; La Blancherie, who has some far-off touch of our ideal, upon which we build a deal of favour; Gardanne, whom we all but marry; and a host who are not placed at all in the race for this young lady's hand.

Every now and then comes papa with "something new," as he terms it, and mademoiselle sits down to compose, in papa's name, a polite

little refusal in the usual form ; and when at last, and not at all in a hurry, arrives Monsieur Roland de la Platière, *savant* and *littérateur* — lean, bald, and yellow — very grave, very austere — "admiring the ancients at the expense of the moderns" — who leaves his MSS. in her keeping, and who endeavours to enliven a five years' courtship by the study of simple equations — we are afraid that she married a theory and not a husband.

> "Let still the woman take
> An elder than herself: so wears she to him,
> So sways she level in her husband's heart."

But not *twenty* years older, surely? Here, at least, the model union was *not* happy. In her scheme of domestic happiness and conjugal duties she had ignored one ingredient, and that not the least — love. For her own peace of mind esteem was not enough: That she devoted herself to Monsieur Roland — that *he* loved *her* with an ever-increasing affection — we have no lack of words to prove ; but we have also words to prove that Roland's twenty years of seniority and naturally dominant temperament were at times very irksome to his wife. As she perceived this feeling growing she became more and more obstinate in her "duty" — no shadow of a name with her.

She carried out her maxim, "that marriage is an association of two individuals, in which the woman takes charge of the happiness of both," to the letter. Her husband, growing gradually querulous and infirm, learned to depend on her for everything, and she wearied of the thrall. Then, too, and last of all, comes the all-absorbing passion — for another. We are led to suppose that Roland knew of this. Loving, sensitive, he saw that his wife was sacrificing herself to him, and he could not bear it. "Happiness," she says, "fled from us. He adored me, I gave myself up to him, and we were miserable."

How shall we speak of this terrible love that flamed up at last through the philosophic crust — that beats and burns in every line of the letters to Buzot? Frankly, we wish they had never been discovered. At least, we know that she combated it, that she redoubled her attention to her husband, and we find her welcoming prison with the prospect of death as the only solution of the struggle between her passion and her duty. And it *is* something that she honoured the marriage tie in revolutionary France, where love was at its lowest, where divorce was dangerously easy, and where almost every feature by which marriage is accounted

honourable was laughed at as the worn-out prejudice of a passed-away *régime*. "We have every reason to believe," says a noble critic, "that Madame Roland would have been indulgent to the frailties of others, yet towards herself she remained inexorable, and never once admitted the possibility of forsaking her old husband, or becoming a faithless wife, save in her heart. This inconsistency, so completely the reverse of what has been generally pictured, may, we think, be counted to such a woman as a virtue."

Did Madame Roland stray as far as the nature and extent of her theological and controversial studies would lead us to infer? We scarcely think so. Although she confesses to having by turns participated in the "exigence of the deist, the rigour of the atheist, the *insouciance* of the sceptic," she perhaps holds these opinions no longer than she was Eucharis or Erminia. For the time being, whatever the creed, she is earnest and sincere. But the early impressions do not wear out so easily. She is still moved, penetrated by the celebration of divine worship; she still sedulously hears mass if only "for the edification of her neighbour." Out of the materialist atmosphere of the time, she believes. Her hopes instinctively turn heavenward; it is

only in the study that she doubts. "*L'esprit a beau s'avancer, il ne va jamais aussi loin que le cœur.*" Let it be recorded, too, that she never fails to raise the simple prayer she quoted, and that the last words of her summary — words carefully expunged by her republican first editor — are, "*Dieu juste, reçois-moi!*"

We do not propose to attempt her physical portrait. Beyond her own written description, and the scattered testimonies of contemporaries, the fact is that no satisfactory picture exists. The painting of Heinsius at Versailles has the dark, intelligent eyes, the abundant hair, "tied up with blue ribbon," the nose, somewhat large at the end "*qui me faisait quelque peine*," and other material points of resemblance; but "it shows her," says M. Dauban, "in *one* only of her aspects." "Four artists" (this is Champagneux, her second editor) "failed to paint her; the fifth effort, which I reproduce here, is the happiest; there is certainly a resemblance, but an infinitude of details are lost." "None of my portraits," she herself informs us, "give any idea of me, except, perhaps, a cameo by Langlois." The truth is that the artists drew her in repose, and repose was not her strength. She had more mind than face, "more expression than feature," as she puts it. Always eloquent,

when animated she became beautiful, and carried everything before her by her fluency, her enthusiasm, the rhythm of her periods, and the beauty of her voice. Miss Helena Williams, Lemontey, Riouffe, Beugnot, all testify to the charm of her conversation. "Camille [Desmoulins] was right," she says somewhere in the memoirs, "in his surprise that, *at my age, and with so little beauty*, I had what he calls admirers." "I never spoke to him." The patient biographer, who only sees her dimly through the dust of shaken documents, is more unfortunate than the unfortunate Camille.

Nor can we hope to do much more than vaguely outline her mental portrait. Man by the head and woman by the heart, she is apparently a chapter of antitheses — a changing compound of sense and sensibility, of reason and feeling. Ranging through light and shadow, — "mobile as the air that she breathes;" now forced by politics into hard, unreasoning hatreds, now loving with a passion beyond control; now so masculine that we distrust her, now so feminine that we admire; naturally graceful, unpleasantly affected; "Puritan and rigorist with overflowing youth and spirit, active and ambitious with the tastes of an ascetic;" more *bourgeoise* than patrician, more patrician than

bourgeoise, — the catalogue is one of oppositions innumerable, of delicate distinctions to be marked only by the practised pencil of an Arnold or a Sainte-Beuve.

And yet, with all her war of head and heart, with all her fallacies — and those were mostly of the time, not hers — she is still a very noble woman, albeit nourished "on Logics, *Encyclopédies*, and the Gospel according to Jean-Jacques." In Carlyle's words, "she shines in that black wreck of things like a white Grecian statue." Her life is grandly closed by the antique dignity of her death.

III.

THERE is an odd fiction current of those days, the invention probably of La Harpe, called the "Prophecy of Cazotte." In 1788, so runs the story, a fashionable company is assembled at the house of a great man, a nobleman and academician. All talking France is there, laced, gallant, and frivolous. To and fro in the crowd go the dapper abbés, murmuring mysteriously at ladies' ears, like bees at bells of flowers. Very polished are the *petits-maîtres*, very radiant the *marquises*. Some one, be-ribboned, with a hand

upon his heart, is quavering out a love-song of Aline or Claudine. Here Chamfort, brilliant and cynical, is relating a questionable anecdote, to cheeks that do not blush, to eyes that do not droop. Backwards and forwards the winged words flutter, and glitter, and sting. For this is the age of wit, of the *chasse aux idées*, of facile phrases, and of rapid thoughts. History is settled forever in the twinkling of a fan; theology is rounded to an epigram; philosophy is a pretty firework with a cascade of sparks. But the all-engrossing topic is the "grand and sublime revolution" that approaches — the Reign of Reason that is to be.

There is but one among the guests who sits apart, — Cazotte, the mystic and Martinist. A little scorn is curved about his lips. Perhaps he sees farther than the rest. They rally him, and he begins to prophesy, amidst peals of laughter. "You, Monsieur de Condorcet," says he, "will die upon the flags of a prison, after having taken poison to cheat the executioner. You," and the finger pointed to Chamfort, "will open your veins." All have their turns, — Bailly, Malesherbes, Vicq-d'Azyr, and the rest. "But the women?" asks the Duchess of Gramont; "we are lucky, we women, to go for nothing in your revolutions." "'T is not

that we don't meddle in them, but it seems we shall not suffer." "You are wrong, mesdames," returned Cazotte, "*for this time you will be treated like the men.*"

It was true. In all the combats, all the expiations of the Revolution, they had their place. In all the clamour of party, and all the solitude of captivity, their voices were heard. Most nobly, too, they played those painful parts, and none more nobly than Madame Roland. "They kill us," said Vergniaux of Marie de Corday — "they kill us; but at least they teach us how to die."

Upon the arrest of her husband, Madame Roland had risen, almost from a bed of sickness, and hurried to the Convention to demand his release. But she could see no one: the Convention was in a state of siege. Outside, the court of the Tuileries was swarming with armed men; inside, the hall presented a scene of hopeless clamour and confusion. Vergniaux, who comes at last, is paralysed and helpless. When, after long waiting, she returned home, she found that Roland had escaped. At seven the next morning she was herself arrested, and taken into the Abbaye, where she was placed in the cell afterwards occupied by Brissot and Mlle. de Corday.

She "took her prison for an hermitage," as Lovelace sings. Never, we think, were those true words so truly realised. She bore the whole of her captivity — a durance so vile that Beugnot longed for death in preference — almost without a murmur. Only once, and then borne down by the miseries of her friends, she thought of suicide, when suicides were common. As soon as she got within the walls she set herself to conquer her position. Forgetful alike of her companions, of her narrow, stifling cage — forgetful, too (and this was hard!) of the foul lampoons of Hébert, which, by a refinement of cruelty, were screeched each day beneath her very windows, she buried herself in her books. "I have my Thomson," she writes to Buzot from the Abbaye, "Shaftesbury, an English dictionary, Plutarch, and Tacitus." "I have taken to drawing again, I read the classics, and I am working at my English." Bosc sends her flowers from the Jardin des Plantes. With these she so enlivens her retreat, that the astonished gaoler declares he shall call it in future the "Pavilion of Flora." At St. Pelagie, to which she is soon removed, she is rather better lodged. "My cell," she writes again, "is just large enough to allow of a chair beside the bed. Here, at a tiny table, I read, and draw, and

write." Here, too, she often sits with the *concierge*, has even for a time the use of a piano, for so do her keepers favour her. And everywhere her patient serenity wins her friends, where friends are rarest, everywhere her quiet dignity commands respect. "All the prison officials," says Champagneux, "treated her with the greatest deference." Her cell is "a temple." "Never in his life has he admired her as he does now."

At last she is transferred to the Conciergerie, the ante-chamber of the guillotine. Riouffe and Count Beugnot have both left records of her latter days in this, the latest of her prisons. "When she arrived," says the former, "without being in the prime of life, she was still very charming; she was tall and elegantly shaped; her countenance was very intelligent, but misfortune and a long confinement had left their traces on her face, and softened her natural vivacity. Something more than is usually found in the looks of women painted itself in those large black eyes of hers, full of expression and sweetness. She spoke to me often at the grate, calling the beheaded *Twenty-two* 'our friends, whom we are so soon to follow.' We were all attentive round her in a sort of admiration and astonishment; she expressed herself with a

purity, with a harmony and prosody, that made her language like music, of which the ear could never have enough." "Her conversation was serious, not cold; coming from the mouth of a beautiful woman, it was frank and courageous as that of a great man, . . . and yet her servant said, 'Before you, she collects her strength; but in her own room she will sit three hours sometimes, leaning upon the window, and weeping.'"

All sorts of company met in the Conciergerie. Where once the cells held ten, some thirty were crammed. The Duchess of Gramont was hustled by a pickpocket, sisters of charity were huddled with the scum of the Salpétrière. But here, amongst the lowest of the low, the room of Madame Roland became an "asylum of peace." "If she descended into the court," says Beugnot, "her presence alone restored order; and these women, whom no other power controlled, were restrained by the fear of her displeasure. She gave pecuniary help to the most needy; to all, counsel, consolation, hope." Round her they clustered as round a tutelary goddess, while they treated the Du Barry like the worst of themselves. When she left they clung about her, crying and kissing her hand, "a sight," says he again, "beyond description." It was

only an eight days' sojourn that she made, but many of the inmates of those dark dungeons grieved sincerely when she died.

The famous Chauveau de la Garde, chivalrous to Quixotism, always ready for that dangerous honour of disputing his victims to Fouquier-Tinville, came to offer her his advocacy, but she declined it, refusing to peril his head in her defence. She went to the tribunal wholly dressed in white, "her long black hair hanging down to her girdle." Coming back, she smilingly drew her hand over the back of her neck, to signify to her fellow-prisoners that she was doomed. She had thanked her judges for having thought her worthy to share the fate of the great and good men they had murdered, "and will try," so she says, "to show upon the scaffold as much courage as they."

She did so. At the foot of the guillotine, it is said, she asked for pen and paper to write the strange thoughts that were rising in her, but her request was not granted. Her sole companion in the tumbril was a certain Lamarque, an assignat-printer. She cheered and consoled him — almost brought back his failing courage by her easy gaiety. To shorten his suffering she offered to give up to him her right of dying first; but Sanson pleaded adverse orders.

"Come, you can't refuse the last request of a lady," and Sanson yields. As they were buckling her on the plank her eyes caught sight of the great statue of Liberty which stood on the Place de la Révolution. "*O Liberté, comme on t'a jouée!*" murmured she. . . . And in the cemetery of the Madeleine there is no stone to show where lie the ashes of the Queen of the Gironde.

There were two men living at that hour who did not long survive the knowledge of her death. One, all stunned and shattered, leaves his place of refuge, walks out four leagues from Rouen, and, sitting down quietly against a tree, passes his sword-cane through his heart, dying so calmly that he seems, when found next morning, "as if asleep." The other, at St. Emilion, "loses his senses for several days." He, too, tracked from place to place, and wandering away from his pursuers, is found at last in a cornfield near Castillon, half-eaten by the wolves. The first of these men was her husband, Roland; the second was her lover, Buzot.

THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE.

1749-1792.

"*Elle était aussi bonne que jolie.*"

MEMOIRS OF THE PRINCE DE LIGNE.

THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE.

I.

IN one of his *Spectator* papers Mr. Addison has remarked of some of the characters in certain heroic poems that they seem to have been invented for no other purpose than to be killed, and that they are celebrated for nothing more than the being knocked on the head with a species of distinction. The same may be said of many of the Revolutionary heroes and heroines. They appear to have suddenly started from the obscurity of insignificance, or, it may be, of self-imposed seclusion, into one luminous moment under the guillotine. Of their life, too, perhaps "nothing became them like the leaving of it." It is difficult, therefore — in many cases impossible — to complete their stories. The author of the biography which, in the present instance, constitutes our most important source of information, is too skilful and elegant a penman to be either dull or tedious, while he is far too clever not to endeavour to conceal the slender nature of his stock-in-trade. But one cannot but feel that his wealth of words smacks some-

what of the questionable hospitality of the Barmecide; and it is not easy to avoid remarking that his book is not so much the "life" as the "death" of the Princess de Lamballe. M. de Lescure's respect has prompted him to raise a votive temple where the simple mural record would suffice, and we confess ourselves not a little impressed by the dexterity with which he has expanded his meagre data into a goodly volume of nearly five hundred pages. For, in truth, the material for a memoir, properly so called, does not seem to exist. The present specimen commences with the marriage of Madame de Lamballe in 1767: we catch glimpses of her between the woods of Rambouillet and the Court of Versailles — now by the side of the queen, now by the Duke of Penthièvre — until 1791, and we have travelled half through our volume. Autobiographical records there are none. Her correspondence was small — indeed, she does not appear to have been imbued with that *furor scribendi* which was characteristic of so many of her contemporaries, and the pair of notes her biographer prints have no especial individuality beyond a certain bird-like, caressing tenderness. There is nothing here to plead for her against the insinuation of Madame de Genlis that she was not witty, for

certainly it is nowhere recorded that she ever said a quotable thing — nay, she even died without uttering the *bon mot* or "last word" which appears to have been an historical necessity of the times. But she is one of those the very silences of whose lives are earnest of their excellence, one of the good people whose histories are unwritten because they were good people. Like the Virgilia to whom we have later likened her — that Virgilia who, in the whole of *Coriolanus*, speaks scarcely thirty verses, and yet remains, nevertheless, perhaps the most distinctly womanly of all Shakspeare's exquisite women — she has little need to talk in order to be known. We recognise her merit by the few testimonies of her contemporaries, by the total absence of any authentic accusation, by the "She was as good as pretty" of a man like the Prince de Ligne, by the "good angel" of the peasants of Penthièvre; and, looking back to Hickel's portrait, a blonde, beautiful head, with the luxuriant hair which once, they say, broke from its bands and rippled to her feet — looking back, too, not ignorant of the days in which she lived, we dare not choose but believe that this delicate girlish woman of forty, round whose lips, despite the veil of sadness in the eyes, a vague *infans pudor* still lingers like a perfume, was, what

we account her to have been, a very tender, loving, and unhappy lady. We shall endeavour, with M. de Lescure's assistance, to relate what, with any certainty, can be ascertained about her.

II.

In 1767 the Duke of Penthièvre, grandson of that haughty Athenaïs de Montespan, who was supplanted in the favour of the Grand Monarque by the Duchess de Fontanges, had asked Louis XV. to choose him a wife for his son, the Prince de Lamballe. The king named the Princess of Savoy. Communications had passed between the courts of France and Sardinia, and the young prince, reassured by a portrait of the lady, had lent himself with docility to his father's proposal. The contract was forthwith signed, and the Princess entered France, arriving on the 30th of January at Montereau. Here she was encountered by a gaily-dressed and mysterious page "with ardent and inquiring looks," who respectfully offered her a magnificent bouquet, and in whom she afterwards, with a pleasant surprise, recognised her future husband. The marriage took place on the same day in the chapel of the Château de Nangis, the home of

the Count de Guerchy. On the 5th of February she was presented at Versailles, and a prompt court poet called attention to the pair in a classic duet, where the nymph of the Seine, consoling Hymen in his lament upon the degeneracy of the age, bids him rejoice at the brilliant promises of the union of Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Savoie-Carignan and the "son of Penthièvre."

Was it so happy, this smiling union of seventeen and twenty? It was not. The prime element of fidelity was ignored — "marriage was no longer a tie" in the court of Louis XV. The Prince de Lamballe was young and ardent, branded with the terrible Bourbon temperament, freshly emancipated from that over-strict education which foreruns excess, and, if not wicked, very weak. What could be anticipated of the Telemachus, with a possible Richelieu for Mentor, a Chartres or a Lauzun for co-disciple, and an easily-conquered Eucharis at the Comédie Française? Only two months of married life, and the absences from the *bergerie* — as it was called — grew sadly frequent, rumours of *petit-soupers* reached Rambouillet, whispers of a certain Mlle. la Forest, of a certain Mlle. la Chassaigne. It is Fielding's story over again, this one of Marie de Lamballe — a story of short

returns to domesticity, of endless wifely forbearance and womanly forgiveness; the story of Amelia, without the repentance of Booth, and with a terrible catastrophe. Only the husband of a year, and Louis de Bourbon had run the swift course which ends in a disgraceful death. He died in 1768, before he was twenty-one. For his epitaph we must turn to Bachaumont's *Memoirs*. "The English *Gamester*," says the chronicler of Mme. Doublet's *nouvelles à la main*, "was played here yesterday under the name of *Beverley*, a *Tragédie Bourgeoise*, imitated from the English. Although the name of the Duke of Orleans had been announced the day before, it did not appear in the bill, which signifies that the prince, *in his sorrow*, could not attend the representation *or, at least, was only there incognito*, on account of the death of the Prince de Lamballe." Bachaumont does not say in express terms that the duke did go to the play — *incognito*. But, to us, the careless frankness of the phrase seems to paint admirably the skin-deep delicacy, the cambric-handkerchief commiseration of these great gentlemen at Versailles, of whom their own journalist can make a remark at once so naïve and candid.

The princess, who had nursed her husband tenderly in his fatal illness, had pardoned his

transgressions and won back his confidence and affection, now "sorrowed for him as if he had deserved it." The widow of eighteen retired to Rambouillet, near Versailles, the seat of her father-in-law, the Duke of Penthièvre, to whom, bereaved of his son and anticipating a separation from his daughter, Mlle. de Bourbon, she for the future consecrated her life. At this time she had regained the natural elasticity of her spirits, although already subject to the fits of melancholy which later became more frequent. The woods of Rambouillet rang often to the laughter of the two princesses whom the ascetic duke, "serious and austere only for himself," called laughingly "the pomps of the century." To one of them, says his valet Fortaire, he would sometimes pleasantly whisper after the balls at Passy, "*Marie la folle*, how many quadrilles have you danced to-day?"

We could willingly linger, did space permit, upon this figure of the charitable Duke of Penthièvre, that contrasts so strongly with the De Lignes and Lauzuns of his day; this "*bourru bienfaisant*" and founder of hospitals, who had fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy, and who lived the life of a Benedictine; this kindly practical castellan of Crécy and Sceaux, of whom his secretary Florian had written —

"Bourbon n'invite pas les folâtres bergères
A s'assembler sous les ormeaux;
Il ne se mêle pas à leur danses légères,
Mais il leur donne des troupeaux;"

we could willingly recall the legend of this "king of the poor" whom the famished royal hunt stormed in his solitude at Rambouillet, to find him girt with a white apron, flourishing a ladle, and preparing the soup of his pensioners; this inconsequent landholder, who salaried the poachers on his estate to prevent a recurrence of their fault, who hunted for benefactions with all the ardour of a sportsman, and who, in company with Florian, had cleared the country round of paupers, and created a positive dearth of wretchedness and misery, and whose known charities and virtues had preserved him through the worst days of the Terror, to die at last — broken by sorrow but strong in faith — in his home at Vernon, where the popular memory still lovingly cherishes its recollection of the good white head and open hand of the old Duke of Penthièvre. But we have another name at the commencement of our paper.

Madame de Lamballe was suddenly drawn from the seclusion of Rambouillet by an intrigue which had no less an object than to place her upon the throne of France. In 1764 — three

years before — the great Queen-courtesan — *la marraine du rococo* — Madame de Pompadour, had passed away, painted and powerful even on her deathbed, and her royal master had watched her exit with a heartless jest. This was followed, in 1765, by the death of the sombre, serious dauphin. For a time a qualified decency prevailed at the court, but when at last, in 1768, the quiet queen faded from the half-light of her life to the darker obscurity of the grave, all the Versailles plotters and panders set eagerly to work to provide the king with a successor. Two parties formed: the one striving to decoy him back to the paths of decency, and to provide a worthy successor to the pious Maria Leczinska; the other attempting to attract the degraded and irresolute monarch to a new *Cotillon III.* The first, a strong court party, was headed by the king's favourite daughter, Madame Adelaïde, together with the Noailles family (the Duchess of Penthièvre had been a Noailles), and sought to advance Madame de Lamballe to the queenly dignity; while the second, led by the king's old tempter, Richelieu, and his Chiffinch, the famous Lebel, endeavoured to introduce a certain disreputable Mademoiselle Lange into the royal household. The latter attempt was successful; partly, perhaps, because the princess, who seems

to have been a passive and unsolicitous agent in the matter, was not calculated, from the very sweetness and excellence of her nature, to entice the sluggish sensualist who governed France back to the self-respect that he had forgotten; partly, again, because the less reputable schemers were aided by the opposition of the great minister Choiseul, who dreaded the ascendency of the family of Noailles, and who was, moreover, strengthened by the disappointed ambition of his sister, Madame de Gramont, who had herself — so rumour averred — aspired without success to the falling mantle of the Pompadour. Thus to the wife of the peculator D' Etioles followed a more scandalous successor. Mademoiselle Lange began her reign as the Countess Du Barry, and the princess went back to her Rambouillet solitude.

But Choiseul, although he had secretly opposed the party of Madame Adelaïde, would not bend to the new favourite, ennobled as she was. He had been pliant enough to Madame de Pompadour — the clever *robine* and art-patroness whom Maria Theresa had condescended to flatter — but he would not imitate her further and treat with this *gaming*-house syren — this impure "Venus sprung from the scum of the Parisian deep" — this Countess Du Barry. We

have no intention of digressing into the web of that long intrigue in which the selfish king, blinded with luxury, and muttering parrot-like on his crumbling throne the temporising *Après moi le déluge* which Pompadour had taught him, yielded at last to Maupeou and Terrai, and exiled his sole capable minister to his home at Chanteloup. But before his exile he had completed one negotiation which concerns us, the marriage of the dauphin, on the 24th April, 1770, to Marie Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria.

Almost from this date commences the friendship of Marie Antoinette and Marie de Lamballe. The warm-hearted, high-spirited dauphiness, seeking for sympathy in the strange formal court where so many looked askance, passed by the Picquignys, Saint-Megrins, and Cossés, to find in the princess a friend at once equal and tender, at once disinterested and devoted; a favourite who asked no favour, except for charity. Henceforth, in all her expeditions to Little Trianon, the queen is accompanied by her inseparable companion; henceforth, in all these sledge parties, which were the delight of the Parisians, peeps from fur and swansdown, in its Slavonian toquet and heron tuft, the flower-like head of the Princess de Lamballe. Begun at the weekly balls of the Duchess de Noailles, strengthened by the

princess's newly-revived office of Superintendent of the Queen's Household, paling perhaps a little before the rising star of the Countess de Polignac, but knit again by sorrow and tempered by tears, the friendship remained the most lasting and characteristic of all the friendships of the unhappy queen, a bond to be broken only by death.

MM. de Goncourt, with that happy pen which seems to write in colours, have sketched her portrait at this period with a felicity of expression which we frankly confess ourselves as unable to emulate as to translate: —

"*La Reine, comme toutes les femmes, se défendait mal contre ses yeux. La figure et la tournure n'étaient pas sans la toucher, et les portraits que nous sont restés de Madame de Lamballe disent la première raison de sa faveur. La plus grand beauté de Madame de Lamballe, était la sérénité de sa physionomie. L'éclair même de ses yeux était tranquille. Malgré les secousses et la fièvre d'une maladie nerveuse, il n'y avait pas un pli, pas une nuage sur son beau front, battu de ces longs cheveux blonds qui boucleront encore autour de la pique de Septembre. Italienne, Madame de Lamballe avait les grâces du Nord, et elle n'était jamais plus belle qu'en traineau, sous la martre et l'hermine, le teint fouetté par un vent*

de neige, ou bien encore lorsque, dans l'ombre d'un grand chapeau de paille, dans un nuage de linon, elle passait comme un de ces rêves dont le peintre anglais Lawrence promène la robe blanche sur les verdures mouillées."

So much for her physical portrait in 1775. With regard to the moral aspect, we shall speak — faithfully reproducing contemporary judgments wherever they can be given without reservation or comment — in the words of the Baronne d'Oberkirch, as quoted by M. de Lescure: — "She is a model," says this lady, "of all the virtues, and especially of filial piety to the father of her unfortunate husband, and of devoted affection to the queen. . . . Her character is gay and naïve, and she is not perhaps very witty. She avoids argument, and yields immediately rather than dispute. She is a sweet, good, amiable woman, incapable of an evil thought, benevolence and virtue personified, and calumny has never made the slightest attempt to attack her. She gives immensely — more, indeed, than she can, and even to the point of inconveniencing herself, for which reason they call her 'the good angel' in the lands of Penthièvre."

We see her now — as clearly as we shall. We know this delicate lady with the *bouche mignonne*, and beautiful eyes, this good angel of

Sceaux and Rambouillet, this alternate *Allegro* and *Penseroso* of the landscapes of Le Nôtre, this queen's friend, "who only sought credit in order to be useful, and favour in order to be loved."

Charitable and pious, gentle and lovable, she stands before us like a realisation of the noble old motto of devotion — *Tender and True.*

III.

The eighteenth century, towards its latter portion especially, has one marked and curious feature — that of credulity. "Its philosophers," says Louis Blanc, "had overworked analysis. They had over-sacrificed sentiment to reason — the happiness of belief to the pride of science. The intellect, keeping solitary watch in the silence of the other faculties, grows wearied and timorous; it ends by doubting everything — by doubting even itself, and seeks oblivion at last in the illusions of imagination. Faith rests from thought, and the repose would differ but little from death were it not that the sleep is filled with dreams. . . . Thus after Voltaire a reaction was inevitable, and the *besoin de croire*, disconcerted but unconquered, reappeared in fantastic forms."

"*Populus vult decipi; decipiatur.*" The demand for miracles was speedily followed by the supply of prophets. After the sober, slow-progressing car of science there suddenly appeared another equipage, flaunting and noisy, with a jingling jack-pudding, and a steeple-hatted, spectacled practitioner — the chariot of the quack. Next to Voltaire and Diderot, Condorcet and D'Alembert, came Dulcamara, vaunting his philtres and elixirs, his hypo-drops and his electuaries, holding the keys of the Future, and discovering the secrets of Life and of Death. The Parisians, enervated and febrile, greedy of novelty, cut from their beliefs, and drifting they knew not whither, caught eagerly at the promises of every charlatan, when charlatans abounded. They cherished and credited the impudent sharper and picaresque Don Juan — Casanova. They believed in the *Chevalière* D'Eon de Beaumont, who persuaded them that he was man or woman as he pleased. They flocked to the Count de St. Germain, who had lived for several centuries, who declared that he had been intimate with Francis the First, and that he had known Our Lord. They flocked to the mountebank Giuseppe Balsamo, who fluently informed them that he was born in the middle of the Red Sea; that he had been

brought up among the Pyramids, and that there — abandoned by his parents — he had learned everything from a wonderful old man who had befriended him. They flocked to the *salle des crises* of Mesmer and D'Eslon ; they flocked to the magnetised elms of the Marquis de Puységur. They crowded the meetings of masonic lodges, and listened eagerly to the obscure eloquence of Saint Martin, the mystic doctrines of Adam Weishaupt. Everywhere the quacks multiplied and the dupes increased, the prophets prophesied and the miracles abounded: the Parisians wished to be deceived, and were deceived.

From this blindness of her century Madame de Lamballe was not wholly exempt. But we may fairly assume that she sought neither to alleviate an unsound mental activity nor to satisfy a prurient craving after the supernatural. If, as is reported, she had been found at the *séances* of D'Eslon, she visited the "enchanted vat" only with the vain hope of obtaining relief from the nervous malady for which she had so long desired a remedy. If, again, she was persuaded to become a masoness, we are expressly told that she had been taught to see in such a step only a means of furthering the ends of charity ; for at that time, as remarks one of her

reviewers, justice, honour, tolerance, and liberty were in all mouths. "It was a very delirium of benevolence and hope." And it was not easy to detect, through the philanthropic jargon, the fanciful rites and seeming harmless festivals of the secret societies, those silent and pertinacious powers that were slowly sapping the bases of things. It would have been hard to believe — in 1781 — that the Utopian banquets of the lodges, with their "good wine and bad verse," could cover the laboratories and asylums for nearly all the indefinite ambitions — all the unquiet yearnings of the times. Even the king himself, whose timorous instincts led him to distrust private meetings, was reassured by the princess's accounts of these harmless associations, that dispensed pensions to the clinking of glasses, and numbered among their members all the greatest nobles of the court. It is clear, too, that the queen, like Madame de Lamballe, saw in that sealed masonic mystery, from which issued at last, as from the fisherman's jar in the Arabian tale, one of the most terrible genii of the Revolution, nothing more than an eccentric institution for the practice of philanthropy. Yet for all this, as M. de Lescure affirms, it was here that the affair of the "Necklace" had its birth and its elaboration. It was here, too, that many

a sleepless French Casca sharpened in the security of secrecy the daggers of '93. These lively bacchic "*Rondes de Tables*," with their "amiable sisters" and assiduous "brothers," their Virtues and their Graces, Cythera and Paphos, were, after all, but the lighter preludes to the *Carillon National* and the sanguinary Carmagnole.

With the exception of her appointment as Superintendent of the Queen's Household, her affiliation to freemasonry appears to have been the most important occurrence in the life of Madame de Lamballe up to 1785 — the most important, of course, of those which have been recorded. In 1777 she had been admitted into the *Loge de la Candeur*, and in 1781 she accepted the dignity of grand mistress of the *Mère Loge Ecossaise d'Adoption*. We shall not reproduce the mediocre but complimentary verses which were chanted to the fair assembly on that occasion by their devoted brother and secretary, M. Robineau de Beaunoir. In 1778 she lost both parents; and in the December of the same year, just after her father's death, we find her by the queen's bedside at the birth of the future Madame Royale — "the poor little one not the less dear for being undesired."

In 1781 the *Mère Loge Ecossaise* distin-

guished itself by great manifestations of charity in honour of the birth of the much-desired dauphin. "I have read with interest," writes the queen in November to the princess, who was nursing the old Duke of Penthièvre, "what has been done in the masonic lodges over which you presided at the commencement of the year, and about which you amused me so. . . . I see that they do not only sing pretty songs, but that they also do good. Your lodges have followed in our footsteps by delivering prisoners and marrying young women." Early in the succeeding year we find Madame de Lamballe by the side of Madame Adelaïde, at the banquet given by the city of Paris to the king in celebration of the same event, when there was placed before the company a Rhine carp which had cost 4,000 francs, and which his majesty had the bad taste to disapprove of. We catch a glimpse of her under the girandoles of Versailles at the ball given to the Russian grand duke (afterwards Paul I.) and his duchess; and again "*en costume de batelière de l'ile d'Amour*," at the Chantilly *fêtes* arranged by the Prince de Condé in honour of the same illustrious personages.

But despite the affluence of words with which her biographer has surrounded his subject, the record of her life during this period has little

more than the barren precision of a court circular. During all this time, M. de Lescure assures us, she was actively charitable, but her personal history is of the kind of which it has been cleverly said, "*Nous entrevoyons, nous ne voyons pas.*"

From its commencement to 1778, the friendship of Madame de Lamballe and the queen had been cloudless. After this, for reasons which have remained obscure, but which are possibly referable to the rising favour of the Countess Jules de Polignac, it had slightly languished. But in 1785 it revived again never to be interrupted except by death. In 1785 the queen had sore need of such an aid. The shades were thickening round the throne, and she stood almost alone. She had lost her ally and adviser, Choiseul. Her court had thinned to a little circle of friends. Outside, the people hated her, and made the *Autrichienne* responsible for every popular misfortune. Outside, the whole kennel of libellers and chronicle-makers, balladmongers and pamphleteers, were in full cry. She was upon the eve of that great scandal of the "Necklace;" she was to be shaken by the death of the Princess Beatrice — she was to be shaken by the death of the dauphin. One can comprehend how readily, with such a dismal

present and such a darkling future, she turned to the friend "who had retired without a murmur," and who returned without complaint. 'Never believe,' she said to her, 'that it will be possible for me not to love you — it is a habit of which my heart has need.'"

From 1786 to 1789, nevertheless, the life is again barren of incident. In the middle of 1787 — if we may believe a letter of Horace Walpole — she paid a visit to England. In May, 1789, she assisted at the opening of the States General, and during the whole of that year seems to have been engaged, on behalf of Marie Antoinette, in negotiations which had for their object the conciliation of the Orleans party. On the 7th of October she learned at the Château d'Eu, where she was staying with the Duke of Penthièvre, of the transfer of the royal family to the Tuileries. On the 8th she joined the queen.

The great event of 1791 is the unsuccessful flight to Varennes. Simultaneously with the escape of the royal fugitives the princess left the Tuileries and sailed from Boulogne, in all probability direct to England. That she came to this country at this time there appears to be no doubt. In one of the little notes printed by M. de Lescure in *fac-simile*, with its "*pattes*

de mouches" handwriting, she speaks of being about to visit Blenheim, Oxford, and Bath, and makes great fun of an English lady whom she had heard that morning reading *Nina* at Brighton. Peltier, too, writing his *Dernier Tableau* here in 1792–93, speaks of her having been at London and Bath after the Varennes affair.

The prime motive of her visit, her biographer supposes, was to obtain the protection of the English government for the royal family. The queen had already sent a messenger — possibly messengers — with this view, but, according to Madame Campan, without any better result than the unsatisfactory declaration of Mr. Pitt, that "he would not allow the French monarchy to perish." The office of secret ambassadress was now intrusted to Madame de Lamballe. "The fact results," says M. de Lescure, "from the following passage of a letter of the queen [to her sister, Marie Christine, Duchess of Saxe Teschen, September, 1791], which acquaints us, sadly enough, with the results which she obtained," and from which we quote the following lines: — "The queen and her daughters received her favourably, but the king's reason is gone. [*La raison du Roi est égarée.*] It is the Chancellor of the Exchequer who governs, and he said cruelly, and almost in express terms to

the princess, that we had brought our misfortune on ourselves."

The passage, no doubt, is explicit. But, curiously enough, this very passage is one of those which were selected to prove the untrustworthy nature of the collection of Marie Antoinette's letters published by Count Paul d'Hunolstein. We had indeed been struck some months ago by the singular way in which the queen speaks of Pitt, but we can lay no claim to the discovery of anything else. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1865, in an examination of the correspondence, points out the several blunders into which the concoctor (for we must assume it so) of the letter meddling with this, to him, *terra incognita* of England, has necessarily fallen. They are, shortly, as follows: — First and foremost, George III. was *not* out of his mind at this time. He was taken ill in October, 1788; resumed government in March, 1789; had no return of his malady for several years, and was certainly in full possession of his faculties in August, 1791. Secondly, the queen, who must have known better, would hardly have called Pitt the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for, although he held the office, he was known by his other title of First Lord of the Treasury; and thirdly, it is improbable that he would have

spoken so harshly and discourteously to a member of that royal family for whom his intervention was requested. Other proofs follow of the neutral attitude of England, and of the fact that Marie Antoinette had at the time sources of communication with this country besides Madame de Lamballe. The first of these reasons is certainly the best. It might indeed be possible for the queen to have made the second mistake, and possibly Pitt's curt answer might have become "almost in express terms" unfeeling and discourteous after passing through two ladies who dreaded and disliked him — one so much that she "could never pronounce his name without a shiver." Combined in some five lines, however, they have a singularly apocryphal appearance, and, all things considered, the passage as a *pièce justificative* of the object of Madame de Lamballe's visit, and what her biographer calls "her attempts to tame and soothe the surly selfishness of English policy," can scarcely be held to be convincing.

M. de Lescure has striven, with all the eloquence of enthusiasm, to impress upon us the transformation that affection now wrought in the modest and retiring princess. He would have her to have become an active diplomatist — a delicate feminine Machiavel, "a modest Iris,"

yielding only to fearful disadvantage. *A propos* of the before-mentioned Orleans negotiation, he enlarges upon this idea; and again *à propos* of the English mission, he calls upon us to admire the "*sang-froid*" of the "*discrète*," the "*insinuante*," and the "*touchante Lamballe*," as she "grapples with the distrustful oppositions of English egoism." But the hard historical Gradgrind cries for facts. Our author allows that details are wanting for the first attempt, while the picturesque diplomatic attitude of the princess in England seems to repose entirely upon the foregoing doubtful extract from the letter of the queen. That she interested herself to the best of her ability for the friends she had left in so strange and sad a strait, and the Marats and Gorsas and Frérons gave her every credit for her efforts, is natural; but we like better to think that it was not her *métier* — that, to use Mr. Carlyle's forcible words, "the piping of the small silver voice" was ineffectual "in the black world-tornado." To a Frenchman it may seem painful that she had not the conspicuous excellence of Frenchwomen or Italians. We like her better so. We like her best restless and pining in her English exile, longing to "throw herself into the tiger's jaws" — to "die by the side of the queen."

The queen, however, did not wish her to return. Letter after letter reiterated this desire — now as a command, now as an entreaty. "I know well that you love me, and I have no need of this new proof. *Quelle bonheur que d'être aimée pour soi-même!* . . . In the new misfortunes that overwhelm me it is a consolation to know that those one loves are in safety. . . . Don't come back, my dear Lamballe," the letters repeat. . . . "I can only tell you not to come back; things are too dreadful, but I have courage for myself, and I don't know whether I could have it for my friends — such a one as yourself, above all. . . . No, once more I say don't come back; don't throw yourself into the tiger's jaws." "Remain where you are," writes the king; "we shall meet at a future time with greater pleasure. Wait for a little time." But it was no longer possible for the princess to stay away. "The queen needs me, and I must live or die at her side," she said. In October she made her will at Aix-la-Chapelle — a will in which even her dogs were not forgotten — and in November she re-entered France.

IV.

"I COMMEND the attachment of my daughter-in-law to the queen," said the old duke to his valet Fortaire; "she has made a very great sacrifice in returning to her, and I fear she will suffer for it." He was to see her again but once. She left him in November to rejoin the royal family at the Tuileries; she returned to him for a few days in the May following, but from that time her life is bound and mingled with her friend's. The Countess de Polignac had yielded to the queen's request and fled. The Abbé de Vermond was gone. The fair-weather Lauzuns and Besenvals were gone — long ago. But the nervous, delicate princess rose to the necessity with an intrepidity of affection wonderful in one so frail. "I went often to visit her," says Madame de la Rochejaquelein; "I saw all her anxieties, all her troubles; there was never any one more courageously devoted to the queen. *She had made sacrifice of her life.* Just before the 10th of August she said to me, 'The more danger increases, the stronger I feel. I am quite ready to die — I fear nothing.'" . . . "The good Lamballe," wrote the queen to Madame

de Polignac, "seemed only to wait for danger to show us all her worth."

When at the second attack upon the Tuileries, in June, 1792, the queen sought to follow the king, whom the National Guard Aclocque had persuaded to show himself to the people, it is Madame de Lamballe who whispers, "Madame, your place is by your children." When, again, the crowd, with a smashing of doors and furniture, surged into the council-room where a handful of guards had barricaded the little group with the great table, behind which the pale queen, with Madame Royale pressed to one side, and the wide-eyed wondering dauphin on the other, stands unmoved by scurrilous words and threatening knives, Madame de Lamballe is closest of all the "courtiers of misfortune." It is Madame de Lamballe again, who, in this Pavillon de Flore of the Tuileries which she gaily styles "her dungeon," charges herself with that difficult duty of sifting and sorting the spirits round the royal family, of retaining only the devoted followers, and removing doubtful or lukewarm adherents from a palace where the best qualification for servitude was the willingness to die. It is Madame de Lamballe, again, who passes, tearful and terrified, on M. de la Rochefoucauld's arm between the files of grenadiers conducting

the king to that insecure refuge of the Assembly. She is with them through all that long day in the ten-foot oven of the *Logotachygraphe*, at the close of which the queen, asking for a handkerchief, cannot obtain one unsprinkled with blood. "We shall come back," Marie Antoinette had said that morning, consoling her trembling women. But Madame de Lamballe had no such hope when she told her escort that they should never see the Tuileries again. She is with them in the cells of the Feuillans Convent; she accompanies them to the Prison of the Temple.

Mesdames St. Brice, Thibaut, and Bazire, ladies-in-waiting to the queen, Madame la Marquise de Tourzel, and Pauline her daughter, governesses to the royal children, and MM. Hue and Chamilly, made up the little group of faithful servants who still clung to royalty in disgrace. It was the middle of August, and the heat was excessive. Garments of every kind were wanting to the prisoners, not yet, indeed, acknowledged to be such, but treated with a strange mingling of insolence and consideration which betokened the disordered state of those about them. In the hastily-prepared apartments of the Feuillans — their nightly prison during their detention by the Assembly — the king had slept with a napkin round his head for a nightcap.

He now wore the coat of an officer of the Cent-Suisses, while the dauphin was dressed in clothes belonging to the son of the Countess of Sutherland. Once in the Temple, various communications with the outer world became necessary, in order to procure changes of dress. All sorts of suspicions were aroused by this proceeding. "They murmured greatly against the women who had followed us," says Madame Royale. An order from the Commune arrived to separate the prisoners; but the Procureur-Général de la Commune, Manuel, touched by the queen's grief, suspended it for a time. The pretext of this dangerous correspondence with outsiders proved, however, too desirable to be passed over, and at midnight on the 19th of August an order arrived to remove from the Temple all persons not belonging to the royal family. The queen vainly objected that the princess was her relation; the order was carried into effect, and the ladies were removed. After the separation "we all four remained unable to sleep," says Madame, simply. The municipals had assured them that the ladies would be sent back after examination; the next day, at seven, they were informed that they had been transferred to the prison of the Little Force. Only M. Hue, returned for a sort time to the Temple.

Madame de Lamballe, Madame de Tourzel, and her daughter, were taken to the Commune, where they were examined. At twelve they were taken to the Force, and separated; but they were afterwards united by the intervention of Manuel. Already the fate of the princess seems to have been decided, for her name was underlined in the prison register.

Meanwhile the inmates of the Temple had not forgotten them. The queen herself, on hearing from Manuel of their detention, had busied herself to pack them up clothes and necessaries. "The next morning," says Pauline de Tourzel, "we received a packet from the Temple; it contained our effects, which the queen had forwarded. She herself, with that goodness which never failed, had taken care to collect them. . . . The inconvenience of our lodging, the horror of the prison, the pain of separation from the king and his family, the severity with which this separation seemed to imply we should be treated, all these things together depressed me greatly, I confess, and extremely terrified the unfortunate princess."

We pass to the commencement of September. It is not here the place to tell the story of the terrible hundred hours during which the Parisian mob, in an agony of rage and fear — fear of the

Prussian at Verdun, fear of the plotter in the city — massacred in a systematic butchery, winked at or organised by the Commune, no less than fourteen hundred and eighty persons in the prisons of Paris. On the 2d of September, at breakfast time, our captives had been told that "passions had been fermenting in Paris since the preceding evening; that massacres were apprehended, that the prisons were threatened, and that several were already forced." Towards midnight on the same day commenced the massacres at La Force.

The proceedings, it is known, were not conducted without a certain parade, or rather parody, of reason and justice. La Force, in particular, had a complete "tribunal of the people" sitting in the room of the *concierge*, and having a president (changed frequently during the four days' sitting), six or seven judges (for the most part emissaries of the Commune), and a public accuser. Before these the prisoner appeared, was hurriedly examined, and speedily judged. If accounted guilty the sentence ran, "Let the accused be discharged," or, with a curious irony, he was dismissed *à l'Abbaye*, or *à Coblentz*, and uncertain of his fate, was pushed through the wicket, and behind the wicket were the butchers. If, on the other hand, he was absolved — a rare

exception — the formula was, "Let him be discharged, with *Vive la nation;*" he was dragged upon a pile of corpses, "the worthy altar of Fraternity," and obliged, amidst shouts and cheers, to swear the civic oath.

Pauline de Tourzel had been separated from her mother some hours before, and saved. The other two prisoners remained in a terrible suspense, awaiting the death of which there seemed but little doubt. They were fetched at last, and taken down into a little court filled by a number of fierce-looking men, the greater number of whom were drunk. Madame de Tourzel was called to the assistance of a fainting lady, and afterwards led to the tribunal. She was examined for a few minutes, then hurried through the wicket, just catching sight of the pile of corpses which choked the little street, and upon which stood two men with dripping sabres, and smuggled away to rejoin her daughter. In the meantime, Madame de Lamballe had been transferred to the adjoining prison of the Greater Force.

It is not easy to decide whether this step was taken in the hope of saving her, or whether it was intended to secure her thus more surely to the vengeance of her assassins. Mesdames de Tourzel were certainly preserved by emissaries

from the Commune. Was the princess included in the same intention? The Duke of Penthièvre, we know, was making every effort. Looking to the result, we are forced to believe that her death had been decided. We pass, however, from surmises to history, and take up her story as told by the royalist journalist, Peltier. "This unfortunate princess," says he, "having been spared [?] on the night of the 2d, had thrown herself upon her bed, a prey to all kinds of horrors and anxieties. She closed her eyes only to open them almost immediately, starting from sleep at some dreadful dream. About eight o'clock in the morning two national guards entered her room, to announce to her that she was about to be transferred to the Abbaye. To this she replied that, prison for prison, she would as soon remain where she was as remove to another, and consequently refused to come down, begging them very earnestly to let her be.

"One of the guards thereupon approached, and said to her harshly that she must obey, for her life depended upon it. She replied that she would do what they desired, and begging those in her room to retire, put on a gown, recalled the national guard, who gave her his arm, and went down to the formidable wicket, where she

found, invested with their scarves, the two municipal officers who were then occupied in judging the prisoners." . . . They were Hébert and l'Huillier. Arrived before this implacable tribunal, the sight of the dripping weapons — of the butchers, whose hands, faces, and clothes were stained with blood — the shrieks of the wretches who were being murdered in the street, so overcame her that she fainted repeatedly. No sooner was she revived by the care of her waiting-woman than she lost consciousness again. When at last she was in a state to be questioned, they made semblance of commencing the interrogatory. This, in few words, was her examination, as gathered by the family of the princess from the report of an ocular witness: —

"Who are you?"

"Marie-Louise, Princess of Savoy."

"Your capacity?"

"Superintendent of the Queen's Household."

"Had you knowledge of the plots of the court on the tenth of August?"

"I do not know if there were any plots on the tenth of August, but I know that I had no knowledge of them."

"Swear liberty, equality, hatred of the King, of the Queen, and of royalty."

"I will willingly swear the first two; I cannot swear the last: it is not in my heart." (Here an assistant whispered, "Swear, then: if you don't swear, you are lost.") The princess did not answer, lifted her hands to her face, and made a step towards the wicket. The judge then said, "Let madame be discharged" (*Qu'on élargisse madame*). The phrase, as we know, was the signal of death. A report has been circulated that it was not the intention of the judge to send her to execution, but those who wished by this to extenuate the horror of her death have forgotten what precautions were taken to save her. Some say that when the wicket was opened she had been recommended to cry "*Vive la nation!*" but that, terrified at the sight of the blood and corpses that met her eye, she could only answer "*Fi l' horreur!*" and that the assassins, applying the very natural exclamation to the cry they demanded of her, had struck her down there and then. Others affirm that at the door of the wicket she only uttered the words "*Je suis perdue.*"

But, however this may be, she had no sooner crossed the threshold than she was struck. "Just at this moment," continues another narrator, who adds some slight details to the foregoing account of Peltier, which, nevertheless, seems to have

served him as a basis — "just at this moment one of the ruffians around her attempted to lift her headdress with his sabre, but as he lurched, drunk, and half-dazed with blood, the point cut her over the eye. The blood gushed out, and her long hair fell upon her shoulders. Two men held her up tightly below the armpits, and obliged her to walk upon the bodies. . . . A few cries of '*Grâce! Grâce!*' were raised by a handful of the spectators posted in the street, but one of the butchers, crying 'death to the disguised lacqueys of the Duke of Penthièvre!' fell upon them with his sabre. Two were killed outright, the rest found safety in flight. Almost at the same instant another of the wretches, with the blow of a club, struck down the princess — senseless between the men who held her up — upon the heap of corpses at his feet." Her head was then cut off, and the headsman, "accompanied by some of his fellows, carried it to the counter of a neighbouring *marchand de vin*, whom they tried to force into drinking *its* health. The man refusing was maltreated, dragged upon a heap of bodies, and compelled, with the knife at his throat, to cry '*Vive la nation!*'" When he returned home his shop was empty; the mob had carried off everything

We have neither intention nor inclination to detail the further atrocities to which the body was subjected. It is sufficient to say that towards mid-day the mob resolved to carry the head in triumph. Having forced a hairdresser to comb, curl, and powder it, in order that the *Autrichienne* might recognise the face, they lifted it upon a pike, formed into a procession with drums and fifes, headed by a boy and an old man dancing like maniacs, and accompanied by a gathering crowd of men, women, and children — ragged, blood-stained, and drunken — shrieking at intervals "*Lamballe! Lamballe!*" and pillaging the wine-shops as they went, they bore their trophy through the streets of Paris — Paris that looked on, inactive and in stupor, during the whole of these four days of infamy and carnage.

History and romance are strangely mingled in the story of this horrible procession. It seems clear, however, that they carried the head first to the Abbey St. Antoine, the abbess of which, Madame de Beauvau, had been a friend of Madame de Lamballe. They then — and this is certain — took it to the Temple to exhibit it to Marie Antoinette. The sight — though not the knowledge — was spared the queen by those about her; but the king's valet, Cléry, saw it

' bloody, but not disfigured, with the fair hair curling yet, and floating round the pike-shaft," as it tossed to and fro above the cruel faces and upturned eyeballs of the crowd who filled the trampled Temple garden, and yelled for *Madame Veto*. It is certain, too, that it was borne as a grim homage to Philip *Egalité*, who was just sitting down to dinner in the Palais Royal, where shameless Madame de Buffon fell backward, shrieking from her chair, her face covered with her hands, "*Ah, mon Dieu! ma tête se promenera un jour de cette manière!*" Where else and with what other incidents until at last it was conveyed away by the emissaries of the Duke de Penthièvre to the Cemetery of the Foundlings, cannot further with any accuracy be related. Of the life of Madame de Lamballe our readers know all that we can tell them, and we have added nothing to the horror of her death.

Not a grand death, we hasten to add, by any means. Not dramatic, for example, in a white dress *parsemée de bouquets de couleur rose*, with longings for pen and ink to chronicle her feelings. Not an august progress through a rancorous mob, in a scarlet shirt, like "Vengeance sanctified." She has left us no political apologia, no address to the French people, with a ring of

"*Quousque tandem*" in it by which we are to remember her; no eloquent appeal to an impartial posterity by which we are to judge her. Yet judge her harshly we shall not — remember her we shall most certainly as one who was "*aussi bonne que jolie;*" as "the good Lamballe, who only needed danger to show us all her worth;" as a genuine woman and ill-fated lady, who was as lovable as Virgilia, as pure as Imogen, and as gentle as Desdemona. "She was beautiful, she was good, she had known no happiness," says Carlyle. Shall we not pity her? Pious where piety was useless, except as the cloak to hide an interest; chaste in a court of *roués* and panders, where chastity was a "prejudice;" a tender wife, a loving daughter, and a loyal friend, — shall we not here lay down upon the grave of Marie de Lamballe our reverential tribute, our little chaplet of *immortelles*, in the name of all good women, wives, and daughters?

"*Elle était mieux femme que les autres.*" To us that apparently indefinite, exquisitely definite sentence most fitly marks the distinction between the subjects of the two preceeding papers and the subject of the present. It is a transition from the stately sitting figure of a marble Agrip-

pina to the breathing, feeling woman at your side; it is the transition from the statuesque, Rachelesque heroines of a David to the "small sweet idyl" of a Greuze. And, we confess it, we were not wholly at ease with those tragic, majestic figures. We shuddered at the dagger and the bowl which suited them so well. We marvelled at their bloodless serenity, their superhuman self-sufficiency; inly we questioned if they breathed and felt. Or was their circulation a matter of machinery — a mere dead-beat escapement? We longed for the *sexe prononcé* of Rivarol — we longed for the showman's "female woman." We respected and we studied, but we could not love them.

With Madame de Lamballe the case is otherwise. Not grand like this one, not heroic like that one, *elle est mieux femme que ces autres.* She, at least, is woman— after a fairer fashion — after a truer type. Not intellectually strong like Manon Phlipon, not Spartan-souled like Marie de Corday, she has still a rare intelligence, a courage of affection. She has that *clairvoyance* of the heart which supersedes all the stimulants of mottoes from Raynal, or maxims from Rousseau; she has that "angel instinct" which is a juster lawgiver than Justinian. It was thought praise to say of the Girondist lady that she was a

greater man than her husband ; it is praise to say of this queen's friend that she was more woman than Madame Roland. Not so grand, not so great, we like the princess best. *Elle est mieux femme que ces autres.*

MADAME DE GENLIS.

1746-1830.

"—— A learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known —
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone:
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did."

Don Juan, canto i. s. 10.

"*Une femme auteur — le plus gracieux et le plus galant des pédagogues.*"

SAINTE-BEUVE.

MADAME DE GENLIS.

I.

THE portrait of Mademoiselle Stephanie-Felicité-Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, otherwise Madame de Sillery-Genlis, which is inserted in Sainte-Beuve's *Galerie des Femmes Célèbres*, does not, at first sight, appear to support the quotations chosen for this paper. Indeed — remembering her only as the respectable preceptress who had prepared a King of France for the hardships and privations of a coming throne by perfecting him in the difficult accomplishments of sleeping comfortably upon a plank, and walking leagues with leaden soles to his boots — we confess to having been somewhat startled by her personal advantages. *This* could never be the epicene genius whom Rivarol had twitted — the omniscient matron who had reserved for her old age the task of re-writing the *Encyclopédie*. O *Dea certe!* we had said, but then it was not Venus that we thought of. Surely a stately presence, surely a personality preternaturally imposing, Minerva-like, august — say

like Madame Dacier, whom we passed in seeking. Not at all! A sham *bergère* simply, from some l'Ile Adam or Chantilly *fête*— some *batelière de l'ile d'Amour*. A sidelong, self-conscious, wide-eyed head, with a ribbon woven in the well-dressed hair — with the complexion of a miniature and the simper of Dresden china. The figure "languishes" with a cultivated *abandon*. One hand trifles elegantly with a ringlet, the other falls with a graceful droop across her harp-strings. "*Je suis excessivement jolie*," she seemed to say with a little confirmatory vibration of a chord. If this is Eroxène or Mélicerte, she manages to wear her *fichu* with a "wild civility" that Myrtillo must find delightfully unpuritanic and enticing. If this is the simple shepherd beauty, then heads must ferment as freely in Arcadia as in Palais Royal *salons*, for the modelled features have been excellently tutored, and the educated smile is most artistically conceived. But there is a book by her side, behind by the leafy trellis rises an easel, and this is Madame la Comtesse de Genlis — the accomplished author, the governor of Louis Philippe, and the counsellor of Bonaparte, very amiably self-satisfied, very characteristically posed, and "our mind's eye" is altogether in the wrong. We send off for her Memoirs, and study them

attentively. What has been discovered, with her assistance will be presently disclosed, but just for a few lines it is needful to digress concerning Madame de Genlis in her capacity of writer.

For she was a writer above all, this simpering, self-contented shepherdess whom we had misjudged so sadly. "She would have invented the inkstand," says M. Sainte-Beuve, "if the inkstand had been uninvented." Not only did she scribble incessantly, but on themes most discordant and opposite. "Madame de Genlis," says a contemporary, "has written enormously. She has essayed almost every style, from the fugitive piece to the bulky alphabetical compilation, from the *roman-poëme* to the treatise on domestic economy and the collection of receipts for the kitchen. She has discoursed for the education of princes and of lacqueys; she has prepared maxims for the throne and precepts for the pantry. And if we add to the variety of her productions the not less extraordinary diversity of her talents, and the marvels of her industry — ranging from wicker-work baskets to wigs *à la brigadière* — we must certainly concede to Madame la Comtesse the gift of universality."

At this distance of time, very little more than the reputation of universality remains. To use a homely figure, Madame la Comtesse was

"Jack of all trades and master of none"—a living exposition of the proverb, "*Qui dit amateur, dit ignorant.*" With infinite curiosity, industry, and energy, and a vanity of science fed and fostered by her singular confidence in her own abilities, she frittered away her talents—the undoubted talents she undoubtedly had—in numberless works of which barely the list survives in the columns of a bibliographical dictionary. She beat out her fine gold into the flattest and flimsiest of leaf, and the leaves bound together form some eighty or ninety volumes. Once and again, perhaps, a novel bearing her name crops up in some new venture of French classics, yet it is but rarely, now-a-days, that one meets with any of the numerous literary offspring of the prolific genius who had lived as many years and written as many volumes as her great adversary, Voltaire.

They need not detain us long, those "many volumes." *Fuit* is written everywhere upon that forgotten fame. The dust lies over it as deep as on the *Clélie* of her childhood from which she first drew inspiration. Few seekers part the leaves in that *Arcadia Deserta;* its arbours are uninhabitable, and its ornaments out of date. *Erminias* and *Darmances* sigh after a sterner fashion in modern novels: no Mayfair

lover drinks down the dried-up bouquet from his fair one's bosom "instead of tea." An enterprising herborist, perchance, might collect from its barren abundance a *hortus-siccus* of faded sentiments; a literary Livingstone, maybe, might pry amongst its mazes for Scudéri's *Fleuve du Tendre*, but for the ordinary latter-day reader its hour has struck. Only a few semi-educational works — *Adèle et Théodore*, *Le Théâtre de l'Education*, *Les Veillées du Château*, *Les Leçons d'une Gouvernante*; two or three historical romances — *Mademoiselle de Lafayette*, *Madame de Maintenon*, *La Duchesse de la Vallière*; and a short novelette — *Mademoiselle de Clermont*, which is held to be her masterpiece, have been singled out by the indulgence of modern criticism. To these for the present purpose we venture to add the eight volumes of Memoirs, and the delightful little collection of anecdotes and recollections entitled *Souvenirs de Félicie*.

The *Souvenirs de Félicie* appeared at a fortunate moment. In 1804 France had passed through the Revolution, the Terror, and the Directory, and was nearing the Empire. The Parisians of 1804 were leagues away from the old gallant and gay *noblesse* that danced, and drank, and acted so light-heartedly through that

"Neapolitan festival" of theirs. Their soldier-successors were not unwilling to hear of them again. Madame la Comtesse had been with them and of them, and these extracts from her journals, sprightly and readable, had a merited success. The volume even now is excessively amusing, and its semi-anonymous character preserves it somewhat from the tiresome and intrusive egotism that disfigures the Memoirs.

It was twenty years after that she published the Memoirs, when she was growing a rather slatternly old lady of fourscore. In these eight volumes she discourses in easy stages, reproducing and diluting her recollections. Their worst fault is their bulk; their garrulity one can almost pardon, for it helps us to the character of the writer. She is herself the matter of her book, to use the expression of Montaigne. She seems to have said, in the witty words of the younger Pliny, "I have no time to write a short letter, so I must e'en write a long one." Nevertheless, her gossipings reward perusal. They constitute a great magazine of pre-revolutionary anecdote — they abound in curious details of the manners and pastimes of the day — they are full of clever *appréciations* (which have been called *dépréciations*, and are none the worse) of those trained talkers and brilliant beauties of the *salons* who

had the *Encyclopédistes* for teachers and the Maréchale de Luxembourg for oracle of tone — the "good company," the "grand society" of ancient France which "Europe came to copy, and vainly strove to imitate."

As she describes it, "Assume a virtue if you have it not," appears to have been its motto. Neither a stainless life nor a superior merit was indispensable to its elect. This sect, of supreme authority in all matters of etiquette, morality, and taste, admitted into its charmed circle both sheep and goat alike, provided they possessed certain superficial elegance of manner — a certain distinctive hall-mark of rank or riches, court-credit or capacity. Its members had carried the art of *savoir-vivre* to an excellence unprecedented save in their own country. Good taste had taught them to imitate the graces out of pure amenity — to observe restrictions, if only for the sake of convenience. To counterfeit gentleness, decency, reserve, modesty, toleration, and amiability — the outward and visible signs of good manners — seemed to be the surest method of attaining their end, which was at once to delight and to enthrall. They had combined all the fashions of pleasing and of interesting with a marvellous adroitness. Discussion in their conversation rarely or never degenerated into dis-

pute; they had banished scandal from their meetings as jarring with the suavity of manner which every one affected. Their politeness had all the urbanity and ease of a habit acquired in childhood, and fostered by nicety of character. They had learned to protect without patronising; to listen with a flattering attention; to praise without being either fulsome or insipid; to welcome a compliment without either receiving or rejecting it; and they had thus created a community which was quoted all over Europe as the most perfect model of refinement, of elegance, and of nobility. Admit that its charm was only veneer — veneer that shammed solidity — yet was it a veneer so rare and smooth, so sweetly aromatic and so delicate in grain, susceptible of so brilliant and so dazzling a polish, that easy-going people might well be pardoned if they mistook it for — nay, very possibly preferred it to — the less attractive excellences of the genuine rosewood or walnût.

But we linger too long. It must be our excuse that it is chiefly from this social point of view — as records of bygone manners — that we have considered Madame de Genlis's Memoirs. Taking upon ourselves little more than the modest office of Chorus, we propose to accompany her through these her chronicles. We

shall ask no pardon if we digress. Madame la Comtesse loses her own way so often that it is difficult not to stray in following her footsteps.

II.

It was in January, 1746 — or, to be historically precise, on the 25th of January, 1746 — that Madame de Genlis "gave herself the trouble to be born." The phrase is used advisedly, for she undoubtedly belonged to that happy class who, as Beaumarchais alleged, had only to go through this trifling and unimportant preliminary in order to insure the success of their future lives. In common with most of the great geniuses of her age, as Voltaire, Rousseau, Newton — and we marvel that her complacent vanity has omitted to point the comparison — she came into the world so small and sickly that she was obliged to be pinned up in a pillow for warmth. In this condition, M. le Bailli, coming to make his compliments to her parents, and being short of sight, all but sat down upon the very chair in which the future governor of kings and counsellor of emperors had been placed for safety.

Her father, M. de St. Aubin, was a gentle-

man of Burgundy. He held a little estate at Champcéri, near Autun; but when his daughter was about six years old he purchased the marquisate of St. Aubin, and removed to the tumble-down château of that name which lay on the banks of the Loire, and was so skilfully designed that the river could not be perceived from any of its windows. Her mother, a Mademoiselle de Mezières, seems to have troubled herself very little — being greatly preoccupied with the exigencies of an idle life — about her daughter's education. Her father, she says, confined himself to overcoming her antipathy to insects, "particularly spiders and frogs." (!) Until she came to St. Aubin she seems to have been left almost entirely to the *femmes-de-chambre,* of whom there were four (a fact which seems to imply that M. de St. Aubin's income of 500*l.* a year must have been infinitely more elastic than at present), who instructed her in the Catechism, and in addition filled her head with romances and fanciful stories. At St. Aubin she was for a time consigned to the village schoolmistress, who taught her to read. "As I had a very good memory, I learned rapidly, and at the end of six or seven months I read fluently." She then had a governess from Brittany, Mademoiselle de Mars, under whose auspices she con-

tinued the study of the Catechism, a little history, a little music, a great deal of Mademoiselle de Scudéri's *Clélie*, and the now forgotten tragedies of Mademoiselle Marie-Anne Barbier. Writing she taught herself afterwards, at the age of eleven.

Even at this time she displayed the ruling passions of her life for scribbling and teaching. At eight, she says, long before she could write, she was already dictating little romances and comedies to Mademoiselle de Mars; and we find her clandestinely keeping a school of little urchins who came to cut rushes under the terrace before her bedroom, on those days when her governess was occupied with her home correspondence: —

"I soon took it into my head to give them lessons — that is to say, to teach them what I knew myself — the Catechism, a verse or two of Mademoiselle Barbier's tragedies, and what I had learned by heart of the elements of music. Leaning upon the wall of the terrace, I gave them these fine lessons in the gravest way in the world. I had a great deal of trouble in making them speak the verses, on account of their Burgundian *patois;* but I was patient, and they were docile. My little pupils, ranged along the wall among the reeds and rushes, nose in air in order

to see me, listened with the greatest attention, for I promised them rewards, and in fact threw them down fruit, little cakes, and all kinds of trifles. . . . At last Mademoiselle de Mars surprised me one day in the midst of my academy. She did not scold me, but she laughed so heartily at the way in which my pupils repeated the poetry, that she entirely put me out of conceit with my learned functions."

At this time she was called the Countess de Lancy. A year before, her mother had carried her to Paris, where, according to the prevailing code of fashion, she had been tortured by dentists, squeezed by staymakers in the orthodox strait-waistcoats, pinched in tight shoes, compelled to wear goggles for squinting, and decorated with an iron collar to correct her country attitudes. Moreover, she learned to wear a hoop; a master was hired to teach her to walk, and she was forbidden to run, to jump, and to ask questions. For the child of 1750 only differed from her mother in this — that she was seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass. Subsequently our heroine had been taken to Lyons for the purpose of procuring her reception as a canoness in the neighbouring chapter of Alix — a kind of honorary novitiate very much *à la mode* among the nobility, which left to the

novice the option of later taking the vows; but, in any case, gave her the advantage of certain privileges and decorations. She thus describes her reception in the church of the chapter: —

"All the sisters — dressed in the fashion of the day, but wearing black silk gowns over hoops, and large cloaks lined with ermine — were in the choir. A priest, styled the grand prior, examined us" [her cousin was admitted at the same time], "made us repeat the *Credo*, and afterwards kneel down on velvet cushions. It was then his duty to cut off a little lock of hair; but as he was very old and almost blind, he gave me a little snip, which I bore *heroically* without a murmur, until it was at last found out by the bleeding of my ear. This done, he put on my finger a consecrated gold ring, and fastened on my head a little piece of black-and-white stuff, about three inches long, which the canonesses termed a husband" [*un mari*]. "He then invested me with the insignia of the order, — a red ribbon with a beautiful enamelled cross, and a broad black watered sash. This ceremony finished, he addressed us briefly, after which we saluted all the canonesses, and then heard high mass. From this moment I was called Madame la Comtesse de Lancy" [a rank to which the canonesses of Alix were entitled].

"My father was lord of Bourbon-*Lancy*" [a town some two leagues from St. Aubin], "and for this reason the name was given to me. The pleasure of hearing myself called *madame* afforded me more delight than all the rest."

The most important business of her childhood seems to have been one in which she always appears, wittingly and unwittingly, to have greatly excelled, namely, acting. We need scarcely say that France, during the latter half of the century especially, went mad for private theatricals. All the world — the great world, of course, and not the mere hemisphere — was most emphatically a stage. No country house but had its company of comedians, no farmer-general but had his carpenters and scene-painters. There were countesses who rivalled Clairon, and princes who rivalled Préville. There were theatres everywhere — at Chantilly, at Villers-Cotterets, at l'Ile Adam, at Little Trianon — nay, for so does the fashion fix its stamp upon the age, even in that far tropical Arcadia of theirs we shall find Paul and Virginia acting Boaz and Ruth, to the sound of a tom-tom, among the palms and ebony-trees of the Mauritius. "To play comedy well," says M. Barrière in his Preface to the *Souvenirs de Félicie*, "became the all-important business — the na-

tional movement, as it were, of this singular epoch. It seemed as if France, involved under Louis XV. in her finances, disgraced in her political relations, and (hardest to believe!) fallen from her military reputation, no longer attached value, interest, or glory except to theatrical successes. The taste for acting had absorbed all classes, levelled all distinctions, connected and confounded all ranks of society."

At the present moment, however, it is with a certain Burgundian company that we are more particularly concerned. In 1755, M. de St. Aubin, growing tired of the country, had gone to Paris for six months (these separations of husband and wife being quite *en règle*, if not *de rigueur*), and her mother, the better to employ the tedious hours of alienation, began at the end of two months to prepare a *fête* for his return. But — *place aux dames* — Madame la Comtesse de Lancy shall speak for herself :—

"She" [her mother] "composed a kind of comic opera in the pastoral style, with a mythological prologue in which I played Cupid. All her lady's-maids — and she had four, all young and pretty — took part in it. Besides this a tragedy was attempted, and they chose *Iphigenie en Aulide*" [Racine]; "my mother took Clytemnestra, and the part of Iphigenia was given to

me. A medical man of Bourbon-Lancy, named Pinot, played Agamemnon, and his eldest son, a youth of eighteen, had a prodigious success in the character of the impetuous Achilles. . . . My mother, in order to provide the requisite costumes, cut up her dresses in the most ruthless manner. I shall never forget that my Cupid's dress in the prologue was pink, covered with point-lace sprinkled all over with little artificial flowers of different colours; it reached down to my knees. I had little boots of straw colour and silver, my long hair fell upon my shoulders, and I had blue wings. My Iphigenia's dress, over a large hoop" [Iphigenia in a large hoop!] "was of *lampas*' [a kind of brocaded silk], "cherry colour and silver, and trimmed with sable."

En vérité Mademoiselle must have been *ravissante*, and we should have been the first to tell her so, certain that our remarks would have been properly appreciated. Let us add that she completely vanquished the impetuous Achilles, who made her a proposal in form after one of the rehearsals. She was then eleven, but she thoroughly appreciated the obligation she had conferred upon society at that important act of her nativity. "That a *doctor's* son, a man *who was not a gentleman*, should have had the audacity to speak of love to Madame la Com-

tesse!" Atrocious! "The young man was" — we rejoice to record it — "reprimanded by his father as he deserved to be."

Meanwhile the rehearsals went on briskly, and the company grew more and more used to the boards. At the end of three months they were playing Voltaire's *Zaïre*, in which Madame de Lancy took the part of the heroine; then the *Folies Amoureuses* of Regnard, in which she played Agatha. The so-called rehearsals were, in fact, performances, as numbers of spectators came from Bourbon-Lancy and Moulins, and "these eternal *fêtes*," she remarks, "must have cost a good deal of money."

Here is a comical incident at one of them: —

"There was a part of the prologue that I liked immensely, and certainly the idea was a novel one. As I have said, I played Cupid, and a little boy from the village represented Pleasure. I had to sing some verses which were supposed to be addressed to my father, and which ended with these words: —

'Au Plaisir j'arrache les ailes
Pour le mieux fixer près de vous,'

and as I concluded I had to seize the little Pleasure and pluck away his wings. But it happened one day at a grand dress-rehearsal,

that the wings, being too firmly fixed, resisted all my efforts. Vainly I shook Pleasure: his wings had grown to his shoulders. I became excited and threw him down, crying piteously; I never let him go, all tumbled though he was, and finally, to my lasting honour, *tore away* the wings of the now *disconsolate* Pleasure, who roared with vexation."

Her Cupid's costume was considered to be so becoming that she wore nothing else, and took her walks abroad with all the paraphernalia, quiver at back and bow in hand. All her dresses were made to pattern. She had a week-day Cupid's dress and a Sunday Cupid's dress. The only difference was that the celestial attributes were removed, and the costume slightly monasticised by a covering cloak, when she went to church. "Friendship," says the pretty French proverb which Byron has made the burden of a song, "is Love without his wings." So the little Countess de Lancy went week-days *en Amour* and Sundays *en Amitié*. If we might be permitted to push the fancy further, we should say that this was very much her position throughout life. The world certainly had her love and the best of her time, but we question very much whether her vaunted attachment to the Church was anything more than a deco-

rous acquaintanceship, or species of unwinged affection.

She kept her Cupid's dress and name for some nine months. M. de St. Aubin, possibly preferring the attractions of Paris to the country theatricals which awaited him, had been a year and a-half away, and still the *fêtes* are continued. Her mother, wishing to add dancing to music and tragedy, invited a *danseuse* from Autun, who taught her to dance a minuet and an *entrée*. But Mademoiselle Mion's saltatory exertions required so much succour from stimulants that she was discharged, and succeeded by a professor of fifty, who was a fencing-master as well. To the *entrée* he added a saraband, and finally taught her to fence, which greatly delighted her. She succeeded so well that her mother decided to let her play Darviane in the *Mélanide* of La Chaussée, a part in which she had to draw sword and defend herself. After this she wore a "charming male costume" until she left Burgundy, a circumstance which, nevertheless, did not prevent her from habitually assisting at the procession of the Fête Dieu attired as an angel.

No one, she says, confessor included, was ever — to her knowledge at least — at all scandalised by this extraordinary equipment and

education. "However, I gained in this way — that my feet were better turned, and I walked far better than most women, while I was certainly more active than any I have known. I led a charming life: in the morning I played a little on the harpsichord and sang; then I learnt my parts, and then I took my dancing lesson and fenced; after this I read until dinner-time with Mademoiselle de Mars."

III.

By this time the dilapidated Château St. Aubin threatened to fall about their ears, and the mother and daughter removed to Bourbon-Lancy, where M. de St. Aubin at length joined them in 1757, when the *fêtes* were of course continued. It is now his turn to be left behind, and the mother and daughter spend a considerable time at Paris with Madame de St. Aubin's sister, Madame de Belleveau. Then M. de St. Aubin, who, in all probability, had been burning the other end of the candle in the capital, is discovered to be ruined — a circumstance which reduces their income to about fifty pounds a year, and causes a quarrel between the sisters. Mademoiselle de Mars is naturally dis-

pensed with. M. de St. Aubin, after some little stay in Burgundy, goes to St. Domingo to retrieve his fortune, and his wife and daughter find a temporary asylum at Passy in the house of a fashionable Mæcenas and farmer-general, M. de la Popelinière.

Here our heroine's theatrical and musical attainments obtained her no small credit. She took *soubrettes'* and *ingénues'* parts in the pieces of M. de la Popelinière, and in one of these danced a dance which, she complacently remarks, had the greatest success. Here, too, she began to acquire, under Gaiffre, otherwise "King David," that art of harp-playing in which she afterwards excelled. Our host was enchanted with our little talents, and would frequently exclaim with a sigh, "What a pity it is that she is only thirteen!" which was fully understood and appreciated. And, indeed, if we had been a little older he should not have sighed in vain, although he was over sixty-five. Every consideration should fall before our respect for age. In any other case we can be firm, as for example when we reject a M. de Monville — who, by our own showing, had every good quality, except quality — upon very much the same grounds as the impetuous Achilles. She has chronicled one of her habits while at Passy, to

which, doubtless, she owed much of that easy fluency which no one has ever attempted to deny to her. In her walks with Mademoiselle Victoire, her mother's *femme-de-chambre*, who took charge of her, *vice* Mademoiselle de Mars dispensed with, she was accustomed to employ herself in the following manner: — While Mademoiselle Victoire sat down and knitted, the little lady marched backwards and forwards before her, rehearsing imaginary dialogues and building innumerable castles in the air.

"In these first dialogues, I always assumed that Mademoiselle de Mars had come to see me secretly. I related to her all that happened to me, all that I thought: *I made her speak perfectly in character.* She gave me very good advice for the present and for the future, and recounted to me also, on her part, all kinds of things, which *I invented with marvellous facility.* I grew so fond of these imaginary conversations that I doubt whether the reality would have had a greater charm for me, and I was sadly disconcerted when Mademoiselle Victoire put an end to them by carrying me away, protesting to my imaginary friend that I should return on the following day at the same hour."

Madame du Deffand, philosophising one day from her "tub," divided the world into three

classes — *les trompeurs, les trompés, et les trompettes.* Madame de Lancy — witness those italicised sentences, witness her memoirs *passim* — belonged, undoubtedly, to the last of these. But she has been criticised as if vanity was a rarity, or self-laudation an uncommon and a monstrous feature of this kind of composition. It is but fair, however, to remember that in this case the education of the writer had peculiarly qualified her for the style, that her talents had hit the taste of the time, and gained her extravagant applause, and that, at least, she seems to have been thoroughly aware of her fault.

"Since I had lost Mademoiselle de Mars" [who, by the way, appears to have been rather more sensible than those about her], "vanity had become the chief motive of all my actions. My heart and my reasoning powers were so little cultivated, I was praised so extravagantly for trifles, that I had acquired a puerile *amour propre* which made me attach an absurd importance to all the merely ornamental talents which could give a certain celebrity."

Quitting Passy, the mother and daughter returned to Paris lodgings, where the music and singing made great progress. At this time, she says, she practised from eight to ten hours a day. The famous Philidor gives her lessons, and she

learns to use several instruments, among others that one which the late M. Victor Hugo persisted in calling the "bugpipe." But the harp is preferred before all; indeed, she takes credit for having made the instrument fashionable — and "King David's fortune."

The summer of 1761 was spent in another country house, where they make the acquaintance of that Madame d'Esparbès of the little hands whose privilege it was to peel cherries for Louis XV., a distinction which was so highly valued that the lady is said to have endured frequent bleeding in order to maintain their "dazzling whiteness." After this Madame de St. Aubin took a small house in the Rue d'Aguesseau, where, among other visitors, come the pastellist Latour, the musician and chess-player, Philidor, and Honavre, the pianist. They saw a great deal of good society, but her instinctive good taste, she tells us, warned her that her mother was far too prodigal of her daughter's singing and playing.

Meanwhile M. de St. Aubin, returning from St. Domingo, it is to be presumed with his fortune retrieved, was taken by the English and imprisoned at Launceston. At Launceston he formed the acquaintance of a brother in misfortune, the Count Brulart de Genlis, an officer

in the navy, who not only procured his friend's release after he had been himself set free, but upon his descriptions and the judicious exhibition of a portrait, fell in love with Madame de Lancy. Her father died shortly after his return to France of a disorder aggravated by pecuniary difficulties. His widow found a temporary refuge in the Convent of the *Filles du Précieux Sang*. Here our heroine received an offer of marriage from a friend of her father — the Baron d'Andlau, who conceived the original idea of forwarding his bulky pedigree by his valet, to assist her in the consideration of the matter, but without success. Probably the fact that M. de Genlis's uncle was Minister for Foreign Affairs, which made him a more eligible suitor, had something to do with it. We all know that Miss Rebecca Sharpe — who in many things is not unlike Madame de Lancy — would have been barely courteous to Jos. Sedley if she happened to hope that Captain Rawdon Crawley would prance up on his black charger from the Knightsbridge Barracks. The Baron, however, determined to be of the family, and resigning the *filia pulchrior*, laid siege to the *pulchra mater*, whom he married about eighteen months after.

From the *Précieux Sang* they moved to Madame du Deffand's convent, St. Joseph. Madame

de Lancy's dates and age depend very often upon her momentary taste and fancy; but it was apparently during her stay here, or in November, 1763, when she was seventeen, she says, that, much to the disgust of his very arbitrary guardian, M. de Genlis married her. With the exception of his brother, M. le Marquis de Genlis, most of her husband's relatives scouted the pair, and after a week or two M. de Genlis carried her to the convent of Origny. Here she remained until April, 1764, while her husband was in garrison at Nancy, for he was now a colonel of grenadiers, and she seems to have passed the time very pleasantly. We have heretofore seen her as Cupid; she now appears as Puck, to say nothing of a part seldom attempted by ladies: —

"I cried a good deal at losing M. de Genlis" [she had a 'gift of tears' quite equal to Loyola's], "and afterwards amused myself immensely at Origny. . . . I had a pretty room inside the convent with my maid, and I had a servant who lodged with the abbess's people in the outer building. . . . I enjoyed myself, and they liked me; I often played my harp to Madame l'Abbesse; I sang motets in the organ-gallery of the church, and played tricks upon the nuns. I scoured the corridors at night-time — that is to say, at mid-

night — attired usually '*en diable*,' with horns and a blackened face, and in this guise I woke up the younger nuns, whilst I crept softly into the cells of the older ones, whom I knew to be thoroughly deaf, and rouged and patched them carefully without disturbing their slumbers. They got up every night to go to the choir, and one may fancy their surprise when, having dressed hastily without glasses, they met in the church and found themselves thus travestied. I went freely into the cells, for the nuns are forbidden to lock themselves in, and are obliged to leave their keys in the doors both day and night. During the whole of the Carnival I gave balls twice a week in my room with the permission of the abbess. They allowed me to have in the village fiddler, who was sixty years of age and blind of one eye. He piqued himself upon knowing all the steps and figures, and I remember that he called the chassés, *flanqués*. My company was composed of nuns and *pensionnaires:* the former acted as men, the latter were the ladies. My refreshments consisted of cider and excellent pastry, which was made in the convent. I have been to many grand balls since, but I question whether I ever danced at any more heartily or with greater gaiety."

Yet, notwithstanding all these escapades, she

still found time to acquire various kinds of information. She learned to bring up fowls, to make pastry and side-dishes. "My guitar, my harp, and my pen employed me a great part of the day, and I devoted at least two hours every morning to reading. I was very ignorant of books, for up to that period all my time had been devoted to music." At Origny, too, she systematically perfects her fictitious dialogues; at Origny, again, she begins to make copious extracts from all she reads, and to scribble verses — among other things an epistle upon the "Tranquillity of the Cloister."

In the spring of 1764 M. de Genlis fetched away his affectionate wife, who accompanied him very unwillingly to his brother's seat at Genlis. M. le Marquis de Genlis was at this time "under the ban." His arbitrary guardian, M. de Puisieux, had not only already shut him up for five years in the Castle of Saumur for his incorrigible gaming, but he had for the last two been living in a kind of exile at his estate of Genlis, under pain of making a good marriage. At the present moment he was absent at Paris, we presume upon what Mr. Weller the elder calls "patrole."

At Genlis the newly-married pair appear to have lived very happily; and here, aided by the

counsels of a second-rate man of letters, M. de Sauvigny, Madame de Genlis pursued her multifarious studies with great energy: —

"Every day, when we came in from walking, we" [M. de Genlis, M. de Sauvigny, and herself] "read aloud for an hour. In a space of four months we thus got through the '*Lettres Provinciales*,' the letters of Madame de Sevigné, and the plays of Corneille. Besides this I read in my room, and time passed very pleasantly and quickly. A surgeon of La Fère, called M. Milet, used to come to Genlis every week; with him I went over my old anatomical studies, and, moreover, learned to bleed, an accomplishment which I have since perfected under the learned Chamousset. I learned also to dress wounds. In fact, I lost no opportunity," etc.

Then she learns riding under the auspices of a soldier of fortune in the neighbourhood, and is almost lost in seeking adventurously for undiscovered countries.

"But this new passion did not make me neglect either my music or my studies; M. de Sauvigny superintended my reading, and I made extracts. I had discovered in the pantry a large folio book, intended for the kitchen accounts; I had taken possession of it, and I wrote down in it a detailed journal of my doings and reflections,

intending to give it to my mother when completed; I wrote every day a few lines, sometimes whole pages. Neglecting no branch of learning, I endeavoured to gain some insight into field-labour and gardening. I went to see the cider made. I went to watch all the workmen in the village at work, — the carpenter, the weaver, the basket-maker, etc. I learned to play at billiards and several games of cards, as piquet, reversis, etc. M. de Genlis drew figures and landscapes capitally" [*parfaitement* is her word] "in pen and ink; I commenced drawing and flower-painting."

M. le Marquis de Genlis having managed to find his heiress, is married to her, and everything in consequence goes merry as his marriage-bell. In September, 1765, Madame de Genlis becomes a mother, after which she is visited by her relations, who thereupon carry her to court. She has left a most laughable description of the terrors of her toilet, over which important business Madame de Puisieux and her daughter, the Maréchale d'Éstrée, wrangle most unbecomingly. Her hair is thrice dressed before her judges decide how it shall be finally worn. They rouge and powder her most lavishly. Then they insist upon squeezing her into her "dress body," in order that she may grow accustomed to it,

lacing her so tightly that she can barely endure the pressure. An angry and prolonged dispute afterwards arises upon the question of the ruff, during which time the unfortunate candidate for court honours is obliged to stand, and when the debate is over, she is so worn out that she can hardly walk in to dinner. The ruff is taken off and replaced at least four times, and the matter is at last decided by the overwhelming influence of the Maréchale's waiting-maids. After the farce of dinner (for she is too tightly laced to eat anything), during the whole of which the discussion is carried on with great acrimony, she is requested to get into her hoop and train, in order to rehearse the curtsey which Gardel, the ballet-master of the opera, has been occupied in teaching her. This is a partial success, although Madame de Puisieux forbids her to slide back her foot in order to disengage her train, a course which leaves her no resource but to fall upon her face, in order to avoid the other extreme of being "theatrical." At last, when they start, she manages secretly to remove a little of the obnoxious colour; but Madame de Puisieux immediately pulls out a rouge-box, and plasters her more thickly than before. However, everything goes off well, and she manages to admire the king.

In 1766 she again has a daughter, after which her aunt, the Madame de Montesson who married the Duke of Orleans in 1773, takes her to l'Ile Adam, the famous country house of the Prince de Conti, which for a *jeune personne* was the highest of honours. Thence they fare to Villers-Cotterets, the seat of the Duke of Orleans, and afterwards to Madame de Puisieux's, at Sillery, where the young countess, returning to that character of *ingénue* which she had played so successfully at Passy, constructs and acts out a clever little drawing-room scene which completely wins over the elder lady, who had hitherto been anything but amiable.

To sum up. The "royal blue eyes" of majesty have shone upon her, and she is marked with the Versailles sign-manual. She has appeared at l'Ile Adam, and propitiated her unpropitious relatives. She may now be said to have made her *début*.

IV.

RESTLESS and frivolous, *ennuyés* and *blasés*, asking incessantly, like her friend M. Damézague, "*Que férons-nous demain matin?*" the fine gentlemen and ladies of 1765 gave a warm welcome to the new *débutante* in good society.

She was young and handsome, a capital actress and a better musician; she had in reality, or affected to have, a childish gaiety and an insatiable appetite for freak which were quite in keeping with the reigning fashion, whilst her uneasy craving for notoriety occupied her unceasingly in catering for the public amusement. The record of the next dozen years of her life is trifling enough. It is an endless chronicle of tricks and mystifications, of mummeries and travesties; an interlude which is all the play — or, better, a *comédie-ballet* after the fashion of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* or the *Malade Imaginaire*. Now, like a modern Poppæa, we see her riding off on a donkey, in company with the Marquise de Genlis, both disguised as peasants, to buy up all the milk in the vicinity, in order to have a bath *à la Romaine;* now secretly learning the dulcimer in a garret at Sillery, with the view of surprising Madame de Puisieux in the character of a *jeune Alsacienne*, whose costume, it is needless to say, she wears for a fortnight afterwards. Acting always — in Norman country houses to audiences of five hundred, at l'Ile Adam, at Villers-Cotterets, at Sillery, at Vaudreuil — and with a success that draws tears of vexation from her less-gifted sisters. At one place they will barely relinquish

her at bed-time, her *bon-mots* are cited, and her merits rehearsed by common consent. She appears, too, to have been sufficiently satisfied with the life she led — at all events, before she entered the Palais Royal. "This was styled a frivolous kind of existence," says she, speaking of M. d'Albaret, fribble and *virtuoso;* "as for me, I think it far happier and more amiable than a life devoted to the acquisition of wealth or the intrigues of ambition." Moreover, her intention in the preservation of these things is purely utilitarian. She is good enough, in fact, to furnish us with the MORAL — *à sa manière. A propos* of the fore-mentioned Alsacian disguise, she writes — "It is not without design that I enter into these minor details; they will not be wholly useless to young ladies who may hereafter peruse this work. I wish to persuade them that youth is never happy unless it is amiable — that is to say, docile, modest, and attentive — and that the true *rôle*" [always a *rôle*, be it observed!] "of a *jeune personne* is to please in her family, and to bring into it gaiety, amusement, and joy." The sentiments are irreproachable. Let us trust that the *jeune personne* will not mistake the wearing of becoming fancy-dresses, the frequent exhibition of her "little talents," and the continual gratification

of her vanity and love of praise, as the primary and principal means to the end she has in view.

Perhaps the best idea of her mode of life at this time may be gained by the recital of her visit to Vaudreuil, in Normandy, the seat of the President Portal. Here, responding to M. Damézague's eternal "*Que férons-nous demain matin?*" we find her organising and drilling a company of amateurs; acting a piece by herself in order to teach them; writing a drama in two days based upon a local tradition (with a "charming *rôle*" for herself of a wigged and bearded old man); re-casting in six more Favart's three-act comedy of "*Les Trois Sultanes*," with another part for herself in which she sings, and dances, and plays on the harp, the harpsichord, the bagpipe, the guitar, the dulcimer, and the hurdy-gurdy. Nor must it be supposed that she could do no more. "I only wanted my *pardessus de viole*," she writes, "but I had not used it for more than three years, and my mandolin would have had but a poor success after my guitar, which I played infinitely better." Eight instruments in all — nine, in point of fact, if we add another upon which her proficiency is remarkable, but which politeness forbids us again to particularise.

From Vaudreuil they made an excursion to Dieppe to visit the ocean, which as yet she had not seen. In the face of Nature, she takes care to tell us, she was so profoundly impressed that her companions complained of her dullness; nor does she omit to state that Neptune received her very discourteously. When they returned to Vaudreuil they find that the president had received information that certain admiring corsairs, who had witnessed the marine exploits of Madame la Comtesse and Madame de Mérode, her companion, had determined, in consequence, to carry them off to the Grand Seigneur's seraglio. The only way in which they can preserve themselves from so eminent and imminent a fate is to be received as Vestals in the temple of the *Petit bois*—a species of sanctuary in the president's private garden, which was reserved for the more select and sacred of his entertainments *en petit comité*. To this temple they were conducted by the nephew of their host, the Count de Caraman, who left them almost immediately. Here they found the High Priestess (Madame de Puisieux) and the High Priest (M. de Portal) waiting to receive them. The temple was decked *(très-orné)* with garlands, and the ladies of the company made up its chaste sisterhood. When, with appropriate verses, they

had been admitted, and the evening shades were closing in, a terrible noise of Turkish music is heard approaching; it is the Grand Seigneur himself coming in person to besiege the temple. The *Pontifex Maximus* resents this infringement, and refuses to sanction the entry of the Infidels. Thereupon some three hundred Turks leap the walls (this is exquisite fooling!) and carry off the Vestals willy-nilly. Madame la Comtesse being slightly frightened and out of temper, seems to have behaved with an intractable and "savage virtue" that would have done credit to a better cause, and which was certainly quite an unexpected surprise to her exalted lover (M. de Caraman), who was glittering with gold and precious stones, and who looked, she records, uncommonly ill in his turban. She absolutely refused to be abducted, and this so rudely, that he was greatly hurt. Laying hold of the lady, he is pinched and scratched and kicked about the legs (she says so) until the maltreated gentleman at last loses his temper, and carries her off in a fury. She is placed in a gorgeous palanquin, and followed on foot by the irate Sultan, limping, possibly, and reproaching her bitterly. In the palanquin, however, soothed by the splendour and the tribute to her talents, she recovers her equanimity and manages to mollify his of-

fended Magnificence. The party are carried through the illuminated gardens to a grandly-decorated ball-room at the end of the park. Here the delighted Oriental declares Madame la Comtesse to be his favourite Sultana; they dance all night, and, *plaudite gentes*, the little play is over, and the drop falls to the entire satisfaction of every one concerned.

Among other things the idlers of 1766 were indebted to her for an ingenious novelty which she contrived for the balls of Madame de Crenay — the *Quadrille des Proverbes.*

"Each couple, in the preliminary two-and-two procession which always preceded the performance, represented a proverb, and every one had chosen a motto. We had unanimously given Madame de Lauzun" [Amélie de Boufflers, afterwards guillotined], "'*Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée.*' She was dressed with the greatest simplicity, and wore a plain grey girdle. She danced with M. de Belzunce. The Duchess de Liancourt danced with the Count de Boulainviliers, who wore the costume of an old man; their motto was — '*A vieux chat jeune souris.*' Madame de Marigni danced with M. de St. Julien, dressed as a negro: she passed her handkerchief from time to time over his face, which signified, '*A laver la tête d'un Maure on*

perd sa lessive.' I don't remember the proverb or the partner of my sister-in-law, the Marquise de Genlis. My own dancer was the Vicomte de Laval, magnificiently attired and blazing with jewellery. I was dressed as a peasant girl. Our proverb was, '*Contentement passe richesse.*' I appeared gay and lively; the vicomte, without any acting, looked sad and *ennuyé.* Thus we made ten. I had written the air — it was very pretty and easily danced to. Gardel composed the figures, which, in accordance with my idea, represented another proverb — '*Reculer pour mieux sauter.*' He made of this the prettiest and liveliest quadrille that I have ever seen."

It had a great success, notwithstanding the schemes of an envious coalition, who attempted to disturb the performers at the *bal de l'Opéra* by the gambols of an immense cat (a little Savoyard in disguise), which represented an adverse proverb — "*Il ne faut pas réveiller le chat qui dort.*" The spectators, however, interfered to protect the dancers.

For all that they were the polished exemplars whom uncouth Europeans "came to copy, and vainly strove to imitate" — amongst the rest Mr. Laurence Sterne, who is here in 1762, a fortnight deep in dinners and suppers, and protesting that in *savoir-vivre* the place exceeds all

places on the globe — these fine ladies and gentlemen did a number of little things, doubtless in the "pure innocence" which prompted his *Tristram* —

"That would have made *Punctilio* stare and gasp."

The stately old Maréchale de Luxembourg, oracle of *petits-soupers* as she was, must not for a moment be mistaken for our respectable and never-too-much-to-be-honoured Mrs. Grundy. And it is with a due respect for the awful *nominis umbra*, who is supposed to sit in eternal judgment over our popular propriety, that we select the following from amongst the lighter examples in this way. In their house in the Rue St. Dominique, M. and Madame de Genlis kept an Italian *abbé*, who read Tasso with the lady, and was in addition an excellent musician. The poor fellow was taken ill with cholera, and died suddenly one evening at ten o'clock. Madame de Genlis, who had been present at his death-bed, was so struck with his face, that she declares she will not sleep under the same roof with the corpse. Forthwith the horses are put to and she goes off to sleep at Madame de Balincour's, where the gentleman gave up his room to her. At half-past twelve she retired to rest. In a few minutes she fell asleep, but was

presently awakened by the entrance of M. de Balincour, "*bon vieillard fort spirituel*," singing a little song in a merry voice, whilst a low whispering betokened that there were five or six persons in the room. This was the little song to the air of "*La Baronne :*" —

"*Dans mon alcôve*
Je m'arracherai les cheveux ; (bis)
Je sens que je deviendrai chauve
Si je n'obtiens ce que je veux
Dans mon alcôve."

To which Madame la Comtesse, nothing disconcerted, replied after a moment's silence with the following impromptu to the same tune. It so happened, fortunately for her, that the *bon vieillard* was almost bald : —

"*Dans votre alcôve*
Moderez l'ardeur de vos feux ; (bis)
Car, enfin, pour devenir chauve
Il faudrait avoir des cheveux
Dans votre alcôve."

The answer, of course, caused a general laugh, and had "the most brilliant success." Lights are brought in, the ladies of the family sit upon the bed, the gentlemen make a circle round it, and the lively company talk of a thousand things until three in the morning, when M. de Balincour goes out, returning almost immediately dressed as a pastry-cook, bearing an immense

basket of sweetmeats, preserves, and fruits. This prolongs the entertainment until five, for the merry gentleman detains them more than half-an-hour in proposing all kinds of amusements, as violins, magic-lanterns, and puppet-shows, and when at last Madame la Comtesse is allowed to sleep, she is awakened again at twelve by the new frolics of the *bon vieillard*. M. de Genlis, appearing to claim his wife, is detained forcibly, and for the next five days there is nothing but acting of parts, ballets, balls, theatres, concerts, fairs, songs, and games — in fact, "the noisiest five days that she ever passed."

Up to the year 1770, they, or rather she — for the absences of her husband were frequent — had lived principally with Madame de Puisieux. In 1770, after some months spent in retirement with this lady, who was mourning the death of her husband, Madame de Genlis left her entirely to enter the Palais Royal as lady-in-waiting to Madame la Duchesse de Chartres, in whom we recognise the somewhat sentimental and romantic Mademoiselle de Bourbon who was the friend of Marie de Lamballe. M. de Genlis, in the meantime, had obtained an appointment as captain of the duke's guards. The duchess seems (at first) to have taken a great

liking to her new attendant, who obligingly teaches her to spell, a kindly office which she had already performed for Madame la Marquise de Genlis. Our space will not permit us to linger over her portraits of the notabilities of the Palais Royal, which strove with the Temple (the palace of the Prince de Conti) for the first place among the *salons* of Paris. Whilst hastening to the next important epoch in her life (in 1776), we may note that she had already visited Holland, Italy, Switzerland, and some parts of Germany. To England she had not yet come. Her experiences of Rousseau and Voltaire, whom she knew and visited during this time, will be given in the succeeding section. Just one more extract and we have done with the frivolous — it were juster, perhaps, to say the most frivolous — portion of the Memoirs. This little incident of the Porcherons is a last example of the morbid desire for excitement which led the great world to envy even the coarse sallies and "vigorous dancing" of the *guinguettes* — of the universal taste for travesties and disguises, which prompted even rigorous Madame Roland to ride off on donkey-back *en cuisinière* — with arm akimbo and air of gaping thickwittedness — after her cousin Trude. For the better appreciation of the performance we subjoin a list of the —

Dramatis Personæ.

Madame la Comtesse de POTOCKA.
(*A Polish lady of rank.*)
Madame la Comtesse de GENLIS.
(*Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Chartres.*)
Madame la Baronne D'ANDLAU.
(*Mother to the above — over fifty.*)

M. de MAISONNEUVE.
(*Chamberlain to King Stanislas of Poland.*)
M. de GENLIS.
(*Captain of Guards to the Duke of Chartres.*)
M. GILLIER.
(*Ci-devant Major in an East Indian Regiment — fifty.*)
Scene — The "Great Conqueror" of the Porcherons.

The Madame de Potocka in question had made the acquaintance of Madame de Genlis at Aix-la-Chapelle, and had been "doing" Paris under her auspices. As yet they had not explored the *guinguettes* — taverns outside the barriers — tea-gardens, in fact, where tea was unknown, and M. de Genlis had proposed to take them to the most noted house of the kind. The ladies were to go as cooks, MM. de Maisonneuve and Genlis as servants in livery.

"The next day," she says, "I was supping at the Palais Royal with Madame de Potocka. On this particular evening she was splendidly dressed in a gold robe, and wearing an enormous quantity of diamonds. At eleven M. de

Genlis came up to her very gravely, and reminded her that it was time to get ready to go to the Porcherons. This notification — addressed as it was to the most majestic figure I have ever seen in my life — made me burst with laughter. We went upstairs to dress, which we did in my mother's room, as she had gone to bed, and wished to see our costumes. Madame de Potocka's noble and stately figure was somewhat coarse, and needed setting off. In her disguise she lost all her dignity, and when she had got on her jacket, red handkerchief, round cap, and check apron, she looked for all the world like a genuine cook, whilst I, on the contrary, in similar costume, lost nothing of my elegant and distinguished air, and was even more remarkable than if I had been tastefully dressed. M. de Maisonneuve had sent an excuse in the morning, so, as we needed two men, we took M. Gillier, and set off in a hackney coach at about half-past eleven. I had the greatest success at the 'Great Conqueror,' where there was a numerous company, and vanquished, at first sight, the runner of M. le Marquis de Brancas, who, waiting upon his master, must have seen me twenty times at table, but did not in the least recognise me. The dress, which made Madame de Potocka look considerably older, made me some ten or twelve

years younger; I looked sixteen or seventeen at the most; and we acted our parts so well that no one had the least suspicion of our being in disguise. I began by dancing a minuet with the runner, with the most countrified air in the world, and afterwards a quadrille. In the meantime M. Gillier ordered some pigeons *à la crapaudine*" [flattened and broiled], "with a salad, *for our refreshment.* We sat down together at a little table, where the gaiety and *gallantry* of M. de Genlis, divided between Madame de Potocka and myself, delighted us exceedingly. There was always something so original and agreeable, and, at the same time, so witty in his pleasantry, that he would have amused the most morbid of mortals.

"A finishing stroke, however, was put to our merriment by a most unexpected occurrence. It was customary to enter the *guinguette* singing, and presently we heard some one bawling at the top of his voice, —

> *'Lison dormait dans un bocage*
> *Un bras par-ci, un bras par-là,'* etc.

"Looking towards the door, we saw two persons come in singing and dancing, one dressed as a servant-girl, the other in one of my liveries. I knew them in an instant, and jumping up, flung myself upon the servant's neck, for it was

no other than my mother leaning upon the arm of M. de Maisonneuve. She had contrived this little trick with him, and for this reason he had excused himself. Our joy and gratitude were unbounded, and there really was a good deal of grace and goodness in this jest of a person as old as my mother was. She sat down at our table with her companion, and she and M. de Genlis were the life and soul of the evening — one of the gayest and most charming that I ever passed in my life. I had never laughed so much since the Genlis and Sillery days, and it was three in the morning before we tore ourselves away from the 'Great Conqueror' of the Porcherons."

V.

With the exception of her acquaintanceship with M. de Sauvigny, Madame de Genlis does not appear to have formed any literary connection of lasting importance previous to her entry of Belle Chasse. Her more-than-friendship with the "flower of pedants," La Harpe, belongs properly to the subsequent period. D'Alembert she had seen before her marriage; he had come to hear her harp-playing in the Rue Neuve St. Paul, but she "disliked him extremely." "He

had a vulgar expression of face," she said, "and told coarse comical anecdotes in a shrill tone of voice." Of Raynal, Marie de Corday's "master," who visited at Madame de Puisieux's, she has left a slight sketch, also *en noir*. As a child she had heard Marmontel read his tales. Something, too, she had seen of the playwright and librettist, Sedaine, whose flame yet flickers in the "*Gageure Imprévue*" and the "*Philosophe sans le savoir;*" musketeer Dorat had written her some pretty complimentary verses; Delille had read part of his *Æneid* to her, and she had met Gibbon and Buffon. She had visited Voltaire and known Rousseau, and, as in duty bound, she has left lengthy accounts of her experiences.

Her short friendship with "Minerva's owl," as Madame de Mirepoix called Rousseau, is thoroughly characteristic both of himself and Madame la Comtesse. He was then at Paris, morbid as ever, neither making nor receiving visits, and, if we may believe her recollections, gaining a scanty subsistence (as he had done before) by copying music. Madame de Genlis had not yet read his works, and admired him chiefly for his opera, the *Dévin du Village*. One day M. de Sauvigny told her in confidence that her husband was about to play her a trick —

in other words to pass off Préville, the Foote of the French stage, the actor whom Sterne calls "Mercury himself," as the author of *Emile*, and the lady promised to appear the dupe of this so-called "mystification," a very popular, and often very unworthy, amusement of the day.

"A Crispin *en philosophe!* — the idea was delightful. Unhappily, M. de Genlis forgot his scheme, and some three weeks afterwards brought Simon Pure himself to visit his wife. Of course she was delighted. The little man who appeared to her, with his round wig and his *marron*-coloured stockings, his very coat and attitudes, presented the most perfect take-off to her appreciative eyes. Moreover, as it was only Préville, there was not the least necessity for any ceremony. So she sang the airs of the *Dévin*, laughed, played, talked of everything that came into her head — in short, was unusually genuine and delightful, and, to the eyes of her astonished husband, excessively eccentric, to say the least of it. Rousseau, quite unaccustomed to such charming freshness and simplicity, was so pleased that he actually promised to dine with them next day. Of course when he was gone there was naturally a full explanation, and extreme confusion, perhaps vexation, upon the part of the lady when she discovered her mis-

take. However, no harm was done; the matter was kept a secret, and the — for once — unsuspecting Rousseau told M. de Sauvigny that he considered the young countess to be a *jeune personne* "the most unaffected, cheerful, and devoid of pretensions he had ever met with."

For the lady, she never knew "a less imposing or more kindly man of letters. He spoke simply of himself, and without bitterness of his enemies." He did full justice to the talents of Voltaire, but added that pride and flatteries had spoiled him. He had already read some of his *Confessions* to Madame d'Egmont, but he considered that our countess was far too young for such a confidence. She had not yet read *Emile;* she would do well to do so when she was older, he said. His works, indeed, he mentioned frequently. He had written all the letters of *Julie* on fancy note-paper with vignettes, he told them, then folded them, and read and re-read them in his walks, as if he had really received them from his mistress. "He had most piercing eyes, and a delightful smile, full of *finesse* and sweetness."

An acquaintance with Rousseau, however, could not endure for ever. For five months he dined with them nearly every day. He was very gay and communicative, and she discovered in him neither susceptibility nor caprice. At

last, as ill-fortune would have it, he praised some Sillery that he had tasted, and expressed a willingness to receive a couple of bottles. M. de Genlis courteously forwarded a case of five-and-twenty. Rousseau's morbid hatred of patronage took the alarm instanter. Back came the case with a laconic epistle breathing flames and fury, and renouncing the donors for ever. But this time the countess wrote an apologetic letter, and managed adroitly to patch up the wound. On the next occasion she was not so successful. She had managed to persuade him to accompany her to the first representation of M. de Sauvigny's *Persiffleur*. He had a great dislike to being seen; but she had procured a grated box with a private entry. Upon reaching the theatre he objected to the closing of the grate, and his presence was, in consequence, soon discovered by the house, who afterwards forgot him for the piece. To the astonishment of his companions, he grew frightfully sombre, refused to return to supper with them, or to listen to their protestations, and the next day declared he would never see them as long as he lived, for they had exhibited him like a wild beast. This time the case was hopeless, and although the lady was able at a later period to render him some small service, she felt no desire for any further inti-

macy with the sensitive philosopher of the Rue Platrière.

Of Voltaire she can only say, *Vidi tantum.* In 1776, she was travelling for her health under the escort of M. Gillier and a German painter of the name of Ott. Being at Geneva, she wrote for permission to visit Voltaire at Ferney, and received a most gracious reply. He would resign his dressing-gown and slippers in her favour, he answered, and invited her to dinner and supper. It was the custom (she says) for his visitors, especially the younger ladies, to pale, and stammer, and even faint upon their presentation to the great man; this, in fact, was the etiquette of the Ferney court. Madame la Comtesse, although unwilling to be pathetic, determined at least to put aside her habitual simplicity, to be less reserved, and, above all, less silent.

With her she took M. Ott, who had never read a line of the author, but was, nevertheless, overflowing with the requisite enthusiasm. They passed on their way the church which he had built, with its superscription of "*Voltaire à Dieu,*" which made her shudder. They arrived three-quarters of an hour too soon, but she piously consoled herself by thinking that she had possibly prevented the penning of a few addi-

tional blasphemies. In the antechamber they discovered a Correggio, whilst occupying the place of honour in the drawing-room was a veritable sign-board, upon which Voltaire was represented as a victorious archangel trampling his grovelling Pompignans and Frérons under his feet. They were received by Madame Denis (the heroine of that unseemly and unfortunate flight from the great Frederick) and Madame de St. Julien, who told them that Voltaire would shortly appear. In the interim Madame de St. Julien took her for a ramble, very much to the detriment of an elaborate toilette, which she confesses she had not neglected. Indeed, when at last she hears that the great man is ready to receive her, a passing glance in the glass assures her, to her complete discomforture, that she presents an utterly tumbled and pitiable appearance.

Madame de St. Julien had advised her to salute Voltaire, adding that he would certainly be pleased. But he took her hand and kissed it, which act of respect was quite sufficient to make her embrace him with great good will. M. Ott was almost transported to tears upon his introduction. He produced some miniatures of sacred subjects, which immediately drew from M. de Voltaire a few critical remarks which were highly offensive to his rigorous lady visitor. At

dinner, she says, he seemed anything but amiable, appearing to be always in a passion with the servants, and calling to them at the top of his voice, which was, however, one of his habits of which she had already been warned. After dinner Madame Denis played to them upon the harpsichord in an old-fashioned style which carried her auditress back to the reign of Louis XIV., and after that their host took them for a drive in his *berline*. Madame la Comtesse shall finish in her own words: —

"He took us into the village [of Ferney] to see the houses he had built and the benevolent institutions that he had established. He is greater there than in his books, for one sees everywhere a well-directed goodness of heart, and one can hardly conceive that the same hand which wrote so many impious, false, and wicked things, should have performed such useful, wise, and noble actions. He showed the village to every stranger who came to visit him, but he did it unaffectedly, spoke with the utmost simplicity and good feeling on the subject, acquainted us with everything that he had done, without the least appearance of boasting, and I know no one who could do as much. When we got back to the château the conversation was very lively; we talked with great interest

of all that we had seen. I did not leave till night-time. . . .

"All the busts and portraits of him" [and they may be numbered by hundreds] "are very like, but no artist has ever rendered his eyes. I expected to find them brilliant and full of fire, and they were certainly the liveliest I ever saw, but they had something unspeakably 'velvety' and sweet about them. The whole soul of Zaïre lay in those eyes of his. His smile and his extremely malicious laugh entirely altered this charming expression of the face. He was greatly broken, and an old-fashioned manner of dressing made him look older still. He had a sepulchral voice, which had a most curious effect, particularly as he had a habit of talking very loud, although he was not deaf. When neither religion nor his enemies were discussed, his conversation was simple, natural, and unpretentious, and consequently, with such wit and talent as he possessed, perfectly delightful. It seemed to me that he could not bear that any one should have, on any point, a different opinion from his own, and when opposed in the slightest degree his manner became bitter and cutting. He had certainly lost much of the politeness which he should have had, but this was quite natural. Since he has lived here people only visit him

to praise him to the skies, his decisions are oracles, every one about him is at his feet, he hears of nothing but the admiration that he inspires, and the most ridiculous exaggerations only appear to him as ordinary homages." . . .

While at Zurich (we carefully follow her in omitting the date, although it was possibly about this time) she made an expedition to the country house of a now half-forgotten idyllist and landscape-painter, whose dust-crowned *Death of Abel* may now and then be discovered in a neglected corner of the book-case hiding under cover of Klopstock's *Messiah* — Solomon Gessner.

His *First Navigator* (which Gardel, by the way, had turned into a ballet) is, he tells her, his favourite work, for he had composed it for his wife in the commencement of their courtship.

" I had a great curiosity to make the acquaintance of the lady whom he had married for love, and who had made him a poet. I pictured her to myself as a charming *bergère*, and I expected that Gessner's house would be an elegant thatched cottage, surrounded by shrubberies and flowers, where nothing was drunk but milk, and where, to use the German expression, every one walked on roses. But when I arrived there I crossed a little garden filled with cabbages and carrots,

that began somewhat to discompose my dreamings of eclogues and idyls, which were entirely upset, on entering the room, by a positive cloud of tobacco-smoke, through which I dimly perceived Gessner drinking beer and pulling at his pipe by the side of a good lady in a jacket and cap who was placidly knitting — it was Madame Gessner. But the good-natured greeting of the husband and wife, their perfect union, their tenderness for their children, and their simplicity, recall to mind the manners and the virtues which the poet has sung; it is always an idyl and the golden age, not indeed in splendid sounding verse, but in simple and unadorned language. Gessner draws and paints landscape in water-colour after a superior fashion; he has sketched all the sites that he has described in his poems. He gave me a beautiful sketch that he had done."

Rousseau in his self-imposed misery at Paris, Voltaire in his court at Ferney, and this simple poet and landscape-painter among his cabbages and carrots, are pictures curiously contrasted. Were it not for want of space, we might have been betrayed into a moral — "*à notre manière.*"

VI.

"WE must represent to ourselves all fashionable female Europe, at this time," says Thackeray, speaking, parenthetically, of the beautiful Lady Coventry, whose death was hastened by immoderate painting, "as plastered with white, and raddled with red." The next occurrence in the life of Madame la Comtesse to which we can assign a *bonâ-fide* date concerns this popular custom. On the 25th of January, 1776, *she left off rouge.* The resignation had a grave significance in those days. It implied the giving up of pretentions to youth, and pomps and vanities generally; and was, in fact, a polite "notice to friends" that the quondam illuminator was about to betake herself to the half-lights and the sad-coloured raiment which announced the *dévote.* Our heroine laments rather comically that "having always had religious sentiments, it is singular that many of her *sacrifices* in this way should have had, nevertheless, a merely mundane origin," for it appears that the present step, in spite of its importance, was rather the result of an accident than a conscientious abnegation of her personal advantages. Eight years before, at Villers-Cotterets, the

talk happening to turn upon some elderly ladies who still clung to the carnations of the Rue St. Honoré, Madame de Genlis had said that she could not understand how the quitting of rouge could possibly be a sacrifice. This inconceivable statement being questioned, she declared that she would leave it off at thirty. M. de Chartres politely pooh-poohed her decision, and she consequently bet him a *discrétion* — a wager in which no sum or article is named — that she would perform her promise. She did so, as we have said, and this is the way in which the affair was fully completed : —

"Some fifteen days before my birthday, I begged M. de Chartres to remember my *discrétion*, and on the 25th of January I discovered in my room a doll as large as life seated at my desk, pen in hand, and wearing a head-dress of millions [!] of quills. Upon one side of the desk was a ream of splendid paper, and upon the other thirty-two blank octavo books, bound in green morocco, with twenty-four smaller ones which were bound in red. At the feet of the figure lay a case filled with note-paper, letter-covers, sealing-wax, gold and silver powder, knife, scissors, rule, compass, etc., etc. I was charmed with my present, and I have never since worn rouge."

Long before, she says, it had been agreed privately between herself and the Duchess of Chartres that if the duchess had a daughter, Madame de Genlis should be her governess. According to the prevailing practice, the princesses of the blood had been hitherto brought up by an under-governor, who took charge of them up to the age of fourteen or fifteen. Madame la Comtesse, justly deciding that this — looking to the value of first impressions — was too precious an interval to be lost, had declared her intention of taking them from their earliest years, and had, moreover, determined to retire with them into a convent. When, in August, 1777, the duchess became the mother of twins, they were temporarily confided to the care of Madame de Rochambeau, and, in pursuance of the above-mentioned arrangement, a pavilion was built in the neighbouring convent of Belle Chasse, which the countess finally entered with her charges.

The pavilion in question lay in the centre of the garden of the convent, with which it was connected by a trellised colonnade overhung with vines. She seems to have at once conceived a definite idea of her duties, and to have carried it out consistently to the end. The household was ordered with the strictest

economy, the furniture was simple, and more useful than ornamental. "I endeavoured," she says, "to make even the furniture subserve to my scheme of education." With this view the walls were painted with medallions of all the Roman emperors, carefully dated, the fire-screens exposed the kings of France, while, for convenience of reference, the hand-screens were devoted to the gods and goddesses. Geography was remanded to the stairs, the maps of the south lying at the bottom, and those of the north at the top, so that the pleased observer starting from "the palms and temples" of the lowest step, slipped through "eternal summer" somewhere in the middle of the flight, and discovered the "North-West Passage" at the summit. Over the doors, again, were scenes from Roman history; over the grating, in letters of gold, was a sentence from the *Spectator*, "True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise." In all this we recognise the heroine of St. Aubin and Sillery—but she is at her best.

She had soon almost a school. Besides Mlle. Adelaïde d'Orleans, whose twin-sister died at five, her own daughters, Caroline and Pulchérie, lived with her. In the first year of her residence at the convent she received a niece, Henriette de

Sercey, later a nephew, César, and "a little English girl, the celebrated Pamela." Of Pamela the world will probably never know more than Madame la Comtesse has chosen to tell. She was sent from England — the story goes — in accordance with the duke's request, in order to help to perfect his children in the English language. "Her name was *Nancy Syms;* I called her Pamela; she did not know a word of French, and in playing with the little princesses she contributed greatly to familiarise them with the English language." In 1782, the duke, to the great disgust of Palais Royal place-hunters, boldly made Madame de Genlis Governor of his three sons, the Duke of Valois (Louis Philippe), then nine, the Duke of Montpensier, seven, and the little Count of Beaujolais, who was about three years old. She gave them a thoroughly practical education. The princes rose at seven, had lessons with their masters in Latin and arithmetic until eleven, at which time they came to their Governor, with whom they remained until ten, when the convent was closed. She gave them masters in botany, chemistry, and drawing — she invented a historical magic-lantern, the slides of which were painted with scenes from "sacred, ancient, and Roman history, together with that of China and Japan." She was the

first governor, she says, who taught languages by conversation — her pupils took their morning walk in German, they dined in English, and they supped in Italian.

When she received the princes the duke had promised to buy them a country house. He bought the estate of St. Leu, where they spent eight months of the year. Here they gardened, botanised, and practised chemistry Their Governor, mindful of her old tastes, made them act voyages in the park (notably those of Vasco de Gama and Snelgrave), which were arranged dramatically from La Harpe's abridgement of Prevôt's collection, and in these performances the whole establishment took part. In the great dining-room they had historical *tableaux*, which David often grouped for them; a theatre was built in which they acted all the pieces out of the *Théâtre d' Education*. In the winter the indefatigable instructress taught them to make portfolios, ribbons, wigs, pasteboard-work, marble-paper, and artificial flowers; to gild, to turn, and to carpenter generally. The Duke of Valois in particular was an excellent joiner. When they went out it was still in pursuit of instruction: they visited museums and manufactories which they had coached up in the *Encyclopédie*, thereby giving their Governor an oppor-

tunity of declaring that the descriptions in that valuable work are often faulty. On the whole, this practico-historico-histrionical education, as it would then have been described, seems to have worked successfully. At worst it was a decided advance upon the former system. The pupils were happy and pleased with their teacher — she herself "led a delicious life at Belle Chasse." Its chief fault, as many critics have already pointed out, seems to have been that an education so universal must of necessity be superficial, and that a life so fruitful in facts could have left but little room for the development of natural impulses, or the growth of those mere flowers of fancy and of life that neither toil nor spin.

One does not easily recognise the cook-maid of the Porcherons, or the mistress of the revels at Vaudreuil, in this energetic and indefatigable preceptress of the convent at Belle Chasse. In those old dialogues of Passy and Origny, dialogues which she continues now as ever, we heard her vaunting her shadowy interlocutor and imaginary counsellor as far superior to that "faithful admonition of a friend," most needful, one would imagine, to a mind like hers, "ever infused and drenched," as Bacon says, "in its affections and customs." "My (imaginary)

friend," she says, "interrupted or interrogated me; her surprise, her admiration, and her eulogies enchanted me. . . . What human friend can enter into our sentiments, can love us, can understand us so well as the fictitious one whom we create for ourselves?"

Yet in the extracts from the journals of the education of her pupils we find her penning such words as these:—

"You will know your friends—if they never flatter you; if they give you salutary advice at the risk of displeasing you for the moment. . . . If you meet with friends worthy of you, you are bound to render them all the services you can perform, without being unjust to others. . . . You ought not to suffer any one of your friends to be accused of any offence against yourself without proofs, especially to your private ear. Distrust every one who attempts to give you a bad opinion of your friends; envy is almost always the motive of these informations, and when they are not supported by positive proofs you ought to despise them, and impose silence by an air of coldness and of complete incredulity upon those who are the informers." If proofs are adduced, "before taking any decided step you ought to have a clear and frank explanation with your friend, for it is only thus that he

can justify himself, and you would yourself be blamable if you did not furnish him all the means in your power for doing so."

Is Madame la Comtesse writing from conviction? or is she romancing *en pédagogue* — just discharging the last coachful of second-hand moralities? We cannot pretend to decide. The sounds which we strike out of this "harp of thousand strings" of ours are often discordant and contradictory enough, and even our moralist, good harpist as she was, could not make her life harmonious. At least, the extracts show that the Governor, dating from the class-room, could write nobly enough of friends. Yet it is one of the saddest things of these Memoirs that she never seems to have had a dear or worthy friend. Secure in her self-reliance, she grew old in all those faults which the "faithful admonition" would have mitigated or corrected.

At Belle Chasse she married both her daughters — the elder to a Belgian nobleman, M. Becelaer de Lawoestine, the younger to a M. de Valence. At Belle Chasse, too, she acquired both her credit and discredit as an author. In 1779-80 she published, under the title of *Théâtre d' Education*, some little dramatic pieces for the benefit of three officers who had been sentenced to a fine or imprisonment for life. The publi-

cation, under such circumstance, of these little moral comedies, which, like Mr. Pitt's early tragedy, had no love in them, "succeeded," she writes to Gibbon, "beyond all her hopes." Already, when, in the winter of 1777 and 1778, her daughters had played them at the Palais Royal, they had gained for their authoress the approbation of the King-Critic, La Harpe, who, in his complimentary verses, "adored, at once, the author, the work, and the actresses."

"He became so passionately attached to me," she afterwards says, "that I was obliged seriously to restrain his enthusiasm." The affair turned out in the "grand style." M. de La Harpe went away to Lyons to cure his complaint, and happily for his peace, returned heart-whole. After this wind-up "in the grand style," however, the matter appears to have ended in the little style — by a literary quarrel.

"We have here," says Franklin, writing from Passy, in 1782, to Mrs. Hewson, "a female writer on education, who has lately published three volumes, which are much talked of. . . . They are much praised and censured." The work referred to was *Adèle et Théodore*, or *Lettres sur l'Education*, her most important effort, and one which procured her, she says, at once "the suffrages of the public, and the irreconcilable

hatred of all the so-called philosophers and their partisans." Indeed, the satire of reigning follies, the less defensible portraiture of individuals (of which she was accused), and above all, her open opposition to the powerful contemporary philosophy, was not calculated to conciliate the reigning powers in literature, or to acquire her crowds of friends. *Adèle et Théodore* was followed, in 1784, by the *Veillées du Château*, in which she pursued the same uncompromising course, and yet appears to have been greatly disgusted by the award of the Monthyon prize to Madame d'Epinay for the second volume of the *Conversations d'Emilie*. Our authoress, of course, ascribes this blow to her enemies of the *Encyclopédie*. "Madame d'Epinay was a philosopher, and took good care not to talk of religion to her Emily." Her work in 1787, *On Religion considered as the only sure Foundation of Happiness and of true Philosophy*, which she wrote for the first communion of the Duke of Valois, put the finishing stroke to her reputation as a *Mère de l'Eglise*, and opponent of liberty of conscience. Her position was not an enviable one. The Palais Royal place-hunters hated her, her political opponents hated her, and the philosophers hated her. She seems to have lived through a hail of epigrams, of many of which

only readers of the *Actes des Apôtres* can conceive the obscenity. The wits found out the unfortunate similitude between her favourite instrument and her critic-lover, and christened her works *Les Œuvres de la Harpe.* Rivarol declared that "she had no sex" — "that Heaven had refused the magic of talent to her productions as it had refused the charm of innocence to her childhood." They caricatured her armed with a rod and a stick of barley-sugar, and finally, turning from the preceptress to the pietist, they wrote, —

> *"Noailles et Sillery, ces mères de l'Eglise,*
> *Voudraient gagner le parlement;*
> *Soit qu'on les voie, ou qu'on les lise*
> *Par malheur on devient aussitôt Protestant."*

We do not pretend to admire Madame de Genlis, nor is there evidence to rehabilitate her if one would. Yet, in appending here her portrait as it has at this time been drawn, it is but fair to remind the reader that it is from the pen of a friend of the Duchess of Chartres, and consequently of an opponent to the countess. "I did not like her," says the Baroness d'Oberkirch, in her *Memoirs*, "spite of her accomplishments and the charm of her conversation; she was too systematic: she is a woman who has laid aside the flowing robes of her sex for

the cap and gown" [we permit ourselves to change the term] "of a pedagogue. Besides, nothing about her is natural. She is constantly in an attitude, as it were, thinking that her portrait, moral or physical, is being taken. She attaches too much importance to her celebrity — she thinks too much of her own opinions. One of the great follies of this masculine woman is her harp; she carries it about with her. She speaks of it when it is not near — she plays upon a crust of bread, and practises with a piece of packthread. When she perceives that any one is looking at her, she rounds her arm, pinches up her mouth, assumes a sentimental look and attitude, and begins to move her fingers." . . . At a party at Madame de Massais' she "sat in the centre of the assembly, sang, talked, commanded, commented, and ended by putting the entire concert into confusion. Most certainly the young Princes of Orleans have a most singular *Governor*, who is ever acting the tutor, and who never forgets her rôle but when she ought most to remember it." Madame la Comtesse has left us no portrait of Madame la Baronne.

VII.

MADAME DE GENLIS had long been meditating a descent upon England. Already some years before Gibbon had been charged to procure her lodgings at London. But she had not been able to carry out her intention, and had consoled herself by making the acquaintance of some of our best authors. "I now know English perfectly," she informs him, in one of the letters which he apparently never had the civility to answer, and the statement is confirmed by Miss Burney, who tells the king that she expressed herself in the language very readily, and with exceeding ease. "As a proof," she goes on to Gibbon, "I read Shakespeare with the greatest facility; but my favourite poet is Milton, whom I like so well as to know a considerable portion of *Paradise Lost* by heart. I also know a good many verses of Pope; but I should make you laugh if you heard me read them." For a Frenchwoman of her time her knowledge of English literature was, in truth, very extensive. With our dramatic authors in particular she seems to have been thoroughly conversant, for she plodded through them all

from Shakespeare and Ben Jonson downwards during her residence at Bury. *A propos* of our comedies, she told Miss Burney that no woman ought to go and see them; and, indeed, the calm student of Farquhar's *Trip to the Jubilee*, or Congreve's *Love for Love* — plays which the prudish Evelina's and Cecilias went to see with their impossible Lord Orvilles — can hardly fail to wonder that the rigorous and respectable company were "perpetually out of countenance" at their extreme indelicacy.

At last, in 1785, she left her pupils at St. Leu, and "in the pleasant month of June" a soft Etesian gale wafted over the illustrious visitor to our hospitable shores. The trip, her record tells us, was "exceedingly brilliant." The public prints teamed with the most obliging notices, and the most complimentary verses, amongst the rest an ode by Hayley. At one of the theatres (she says) *Hamlet* was performed in her honour; Lord Inchiquin took her to the House of Commons. By desire of the Prince of Wales, Lord William Gordon entertained her at his house, and the "First Gentleman in Europe" "paid great attention" to the illustrious adviser of Philippe *Egalité*. Burke invited her to his country seat, and afterwards carried her to Oxford. While with him she made the acquaint-

ance of the "Chevalier Reinolds," as she calls him, who "shifted his trumpet and only took snuff" when the enthusiastic lady talked to him of her art achievements. Here, too, she met Windham, whose published *Diary*, however, contains nothing very important about her. The queen, to whom she had hitherto forwarded copies of her works, gave her a private audience; Lord Mansfield, then over eighty years of age, asked permission to visit her, and presented her with a moss-rose tree, which she claims to have first introduced into France. She made an excursion to Blenheim, where the Duchess of Marlborough finding out by the lodge-book how celebrated a lady had left her grounds, sent a servant after her with a present of pine-apples. She offered the man a guinea, which he refused, saying, "Madame, I cannot accept it — I am a Frenchman." Another visit was paid to the son-in-law of Richardson, who (she says) offered her a MS. copy of *Pamela*, corrected by the author himself, upon the condition that she would translate it literally, a proposition which she did not consider herself to be warranted in making. Mr. Bridget took her to St. Bride's, in the aisle of which his father-in-law lay buried, and told her that the year before a great French lady, Madame du Tessé, had flung herself down upon the stone,

crying and groaning so terribly as to make her companion fear that she would faint. If anywhere in that old churchyard was wandering the spirit of the mild-eyed, half-feminine little printer, it must have felt a well-nigh mortal vanity at such an offering of sentimental tears.

Horace Walpole has left an account in his correspondence of her appearance at Strawberry Hill. The ingenious *virtuoso*, who, with a little Attic salt—or, rather, for the sake of it—would have eaten his dearest friend, had been making very merry in his previous letters over "Rousseau's hen — the schoolmistress, Madame de Genlis" — the "moral Madame de Genlis," as he was pleased to style her. His description, however, betrays a greater admiration than might have been anticipated, and as a whole — one sidelong sarcasm excepted — is certainly in her favour. "Ten days ago," he writes to the Countess of Ossory, "Mrs. Cosway sent me a note that *Madame* desired a ticket for Strawberry Hill. I thought I could not do less than offer her a breakfast, and named yesterday se'nnight. Then came a message that she must go to Oxford and take her Doctor's degree; and then another that I should see her yesterday" [July 22d, 1785], "when she did arrive, with Miss Wilkes" [John Wilkes's daughter], "and Pamela,

whom she did not even present to me, and whom she has educated to be very like herself in the face. I told her I could not attribute the honour of her visit but to my late dear friend, Madame du Deffand. . . . Her person is agreeable, and she seems to have been pretty. Her conversation is natural and reasonable, not *précieuse* and affected, and searching to be eloquent, as I had expected. I asked her if she had been pleased with Oxford, meaning the buildings, not the wretched oafs who inhabit it. She said she had had little time; that she had wished to learn their plan of education, which, as she said sensibly, she supposed was adapted to our Constitution. I could have told her that it is exactly repugnant to our Constitution, and that nothing is taught there but drunkenness and prerogative — or, in their language, Church and King. I asked her if it is true that the new edition of Voltaire's works is prohibited. She replied, severely, and then condemned those who write against religion and government, which was a little unlucky before her friend *Miss Wilkes*. She stayed two hours, and returns to France to-day *to her duty*."

Madame la Comtesse, consequently, went back to France towards the end of July, after a six weeks' stay — six weeks, let us note, very

fully occupied, if we add to the "excursions, visits, and entertainments," a certain amount of time which her indefatigable energy set aside for a tutor in English declamation, and a jeweller who taught her to make ornaments in seed pearl. Her next visit took place in 1791. The eventful years which occupy the interval are hardly noticed in the Memoirs, which for this period are almost wholly taken up with the account of her rupture with the Duchess of Orleans. The causes are stated obscurely enough. Whether the alleged "difference of opinion" was the real source of disagreement, or whether this was a delicate euphemism for the tardy recognition by the wife of Egalité of a yet deeper and graver wrong, it would be difficult to decide. One thing is clear, and this is the pelican-like self-denial and heartrending forbearance of Madame la Comtesse. Another thing appears certain — that whether her influence over the duke was or was not exercised previously to the Revolution, she acquired the reputation of being his adviser, and added to her detractors all his political opponents. The duchess tried vainly to oblige her to resign, but the Governor, insisting upon a real or feigned attachment to Mlle. d'Orleans, kept her place in spite of everything, until at last her opponent gave up the matter in despair.

One of the results of this quarrel was the publication of the *Leçons d'une Gouvernante*, in which she printed an account of the affair, together with extracts of the journals kept of the education of her pupils. This was in August, 1791. In the October of the same year permission was at last given by the Duke of Orleans, and the ill-health of Mademoiselle serving as a pretext, they (Pamela, Henrietta Sercey, the countess, and her charge) crossed to England to take the Bath waters. After two months spent at that place, where, despite our disreputable comedies, they sedulously frequented the theatre, they removed to Bury St. Edmunds, where they lived for several months in comparative retirement, only making occasional excursions to different parts of the country. At Bury they became acquainted with Mr. Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, Mr. Hervey, afterwards Lord Bristol, and saw something of the famous agriculturist, Arthur Young. They were visited by Windham, Swinburne, Fox, and Sheridan, the latter having, possibly, some subordinate intention of flirting with Pamela, whom he undoubtedly admired, although, Mr. Moore infers, it is improbable that he offered to marry her, as Madame de Genlis would have us to believe. Besides, it was only during her stay at

Bury that he had lost Mrs. Sheridan, to whom he was greatly attached.

Miss Burney has given us a little glimpse of the Bury life. When she had first made the acquaintance of Madame de Genlis, in 1785, she had been greatly prepossessed in her favour. She is "the sweetest and most accomplished Frenchwoman that she ever met with." . . . "I saw her at first with a prejudice in her disfavour from the cruel reports I had heard, but the moment I looked at her it was removed. There was a dignity with her sweetness, and a frankness with her modesty, that convinced me beyond all power of report of her real worth and innocence." And, indeed, she seems to have had all through a kind of liking for her, although she acted in opposition to her oft-repeated conviction, and allowed the "cruel reports" to awe her into keeping aloof from the "fascinating allurements" of the lady who was so anxious to correspond with "*cette chère Miss Beurni.*" The Royalists with whom England was swarming — men like the Duc de Liancourt, who spoke, "with eyes of fire," of this "*coquine de Brulart,*" who "adored the Duchess of Orleans," and would have caned her husband in the streets, as the prime cause of his country's misery — were not likely to prejudice any one

in favour of the clever "*intrigante*" who, as they believed, had helped to mislead him. But Miss Burney expresses herself with such a mysterious and pious horror of Madame Brulart that we sincerely wish she had cited something a little more shocking than the following: —

"They" [Arthur Young's wife and daughter] "give a very unpleasant account of Madame de Genlis, or De Sillery, or Brulart, as she is now called. They say she has established herself at Bury, in their neighbourhood, with Mlle. la Princesse d'Orleans and Pamela, and a *Circe*" [Henrietta Sercey], "another young girl under her care. They have taken a house, the master of which always dines with them, though Mrs. Young says he is such a low man he should not dine with her daughter. They form twenty with themselves and household. They keep a botanist, a chemist, and a natural historian always with them. These are supposed to have been common servants of the Duke of Orleans in former days, as they always walk behind the ladies when abroad; but, to make amends in the new equalising style, they all dine together at home. They visit at no house but Sir Thomas Gage's, where they carry their harps, and frequently have music. They have been to a Bury ball, and danced all night; Mlle. d'Orleans with anybody, known or

unknown to Madame Brulart." All this may sound very dreadful to the starched little Tory who had given up her literary fame for the melancholy monotony and niggard favours of the court of Queen Charlotte, yet it scarcely deserves to be termed a "woful change from that elegant, amiable, high-bred Madame de Genlis" of six years past, "the apparent pattern of female perfection in manners, conversation, and delicacy."

After the September massacres Madame de Genlis received a letter from the Duke of Orleans, bidding her to return to France with her charge. She refused to do so, considering it unreasonable to expect her to come back at such an unsettled period. Her position was exceedingly embarrassing, and her active imagination added greatly to the terrors of the situation. "I am uneasy, sick, unhappy," she writes to Sheridan from Bury, in the "bad language" for which she apologises; "surrounded by the most dreadful snares of the fraud and wickedness" — "intrusted with the most interesting and sacred charge." In the commencement of the month of November the duke sent an emissary charged to bring away his daughter, if her instructress refused to return with her. This, acting upon Sheridan's advice, she decided to

do. They set out upon their perilous journey in October, 1792. The fervid fancy of the countess had peopled the "antres vast and deserts idle" that lay between London and Dover with innumerable poniards aimed at the existence of her illustrious *protégée*. Mr. Sheridan's propensity for practical joking, added to the opportune recollection of an incident in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, did not allow her to be disappointed of her romantic terrors.

They went off in two carriages, with a footman, hired for the occasion, and a French lacquey. The remainder of the servants had returned to Paris. After having gone about a mile the Frenchman begins to think that they are not in the right road, a suspicion which he easily communicates to his mistress. The post-boys, being examined, answer evasively — more suspicions! This is decidedly worse "than crossing the desert plains of Newmarket," which had filled her with such terrible anticipations a day or two before. However, on they go for three-quarters of an hour more, passing quickly through an utterly unknown, or seemingly unknown, tract of country. The post-boys and hired footman, again applied to, again reply — evasively. More rapidly than ever they pursue their uncertain route, the post-boys answering all ques-

tions laconically, unwillingly, mysteriously, and appearing most unaccountably afraid to come to a stop. At last they confess to the remarkable fact that they have "lost their way" between London and Dover, but that they are now well on the road to their next stage, which is Dartford. This is a relief; but as the journey still continues for an hour at least, the countess insists, notwithstanding all the objections of the incomprehensible post-boys, upon stopping at a village to inquire where she is. "About twenty-two miles from Dartford," they obligingly inform her. Thereupon, the post-boys resisting to the last, she goes back to London forthwith, finding herself, strange to say, at an easy and convenient distance from this her starting-place.

No clue is given to this highly romantic expedition *à la* Mrs. Hardcastle. "I merely relate the facts without explanation, or the addition of any reflections of my own, as the impartial reader can make them for himself." But when we remember the shameful trick that the "First Gentleman in Europe" played upon the old Duke of Norfolk at the Pavilion on the Steyne — when we recall the mishaps of Madame Duval, as recorded in *Evelina* — and above all, when we learn that the result of this journey from London to London was to cause the detention of the

whole party at Sheridan's country house for a month, and consider, too, his prompt hushing-up of the whole affair, it is hardly possible not to agree with his biographer that the trick was of his contriving. At any rate, with him, at Isleworth they remained until the end of November, when their host accompanied them to Dover.

They arrived at Paris only to discover that, as she had failed to return earlier, Mlle. d'Orleans was then, by the recent law, included among the *émigrés*. No course was open to Madame de Genlis but to act in accordance with the duke's desire, and carry her pupil to a neutral country until such time as she should be excepted from the list. A day or two before their departure for the place chosen — Tournay — her husband, now M. de Sillery, took them to see *Lodoïska* at one of the theatres. It was here that Lord Edward Fitzgerald (who had hitherto, from a dread of learned ladies, studiously kept aloof from Madame la Comtesse) saw Pamela for the first time. She is said to have borne a singular resemblance to Mrs. Sheridan, whom he had greatly admired, and who, indeed, according to Moore's *Life*, had even expressed a wish that after her death he should marry this very girl, whose beauty and

resemblance to herself, her husband, fresh from some recent excursion to Bury, had been enthusiastically describing. Lord Edward fell in love on the spot, made an immediate acquaintance, and following them to Tournay, proposed, was accepted, and there married at the end of December to the *citoyenne* Anne Caroline Stéphanie Syms, otherwise Pamela, born at Fogo [?] in Newfoundland, daughter of Guillaume de Brixey and Mary Syms, in the presence of, and assisted by, the *citoyennes* Brulart-Sillery and Adèle Egalité, the *citoyens* Philippe Egalité and Louis Philippe Egalité, General O'Moran, and others.

Despite this circumstantial fiction (which courtesy requires us to preserve), loquacious Rumour persists in assigning a very different parentage to "the dear little, pale, pretty wife," as he calls her, of the ill-fated Fitzgerald. And, unless we are mistaken, Rumour is supported by these words from one of his letters to his mother, the Duchess of Leinster, in January, 1794:— "My dear little wife has, upon the whole, been cheerful and amused, which, of course, pleases me. I never have received an answer from *her mother*, so that Pamela is still ignorant of what has happened." There is but one person to whom the title can allude, and amongst other things that had recently happened was the

death, in November, 1793, of one of the most illustrious witnesses of the Tournay marriage, the sometime Duke of Orleans — Philippe Egalité.

VIII.

In January, 1794, when the last-mentioned letter was written, Madame de Genlis had found a resting-place in the convent of St. Claire, at Bremgarten, in Switzerland. Mlle. d'Orleans was still with her. No one had arrived to relieve the ex-governor of a charge who, we are inclined to fancy, had ceased to be as "interesting" and "sacred" as of yore. Then came the king's death and the declaration of war. "We could not remain at Tournay," writes Mademoiselle, "as the Austrians were about to enter it; and could not return to France, as a law forbade us to do so, upon pain of death; M. Dumouriez offered us an asylum in his camp. We set out with his army, and stopped in the town of St. Amand, while he remained at the mineral springs, a quarter of a league distant." But a revolt broke out in the camp, and Madame de Genlis, yielding to the wish of the Duke de Chartres, fled in haste to Mons with his sister. Thence passing to Switzerland, they found sanc-

tuary at Bremgarten, there to remain until at last, in May, 1794, Mademoiselle was received by her aunt, the Princess de Conti, who was living at Friburg. Meanwhile her brave young brother, after fighting his way out from the camp of Dumouriez, had quietly settled down to teach mathematics in a college of the Grisons under the pseudonym of Corby.

The next halt of the countess was made at Altona, where, amongst other things, she gained her livelihood by painting patterns for a cloth manufactory. Her husband had voted against the death of the king, and had been guillotined in 1793 with the Girondins. The sole *protégée* who remained to her now was Henrietta Sercey, whom she had left at Utrecht under the protection of a foreign lady. At Altona she lived at an inn called "*Plock's*," the master of which was well affected to the Revolution, and where she was known by the name of "Miss Clarke." During all this time (she says) it was commonly supposed that she was living with Dumouriez; in fact, it was often asserted in her presence at the *table d'hôte*, and, besides, industriously circulated by all the *émigrés*, who still persisted in regarding her as "one of the principal authors of the Revolution." Her slight connection with the general (and she insists that it was slight)

had added to her enemies all the patriots who hated him for his treason. She managed, however, to live here nine months undiscovered, spending her days with the inevitable harp, her paint-box, and her ink-bottle, not omitting, besides, to diversify them with waltzes and games in the rooms of a neighbouring Madame Gudin, and even finding time to inspire the admiration of a middle-aged baker, who made her a proposal. While here she learned the death, on the memorable 28th of July, 1794, of Maximilian Robespierre, and the termination of the Terror.

"I was greatly surprised at hearing loud and repeated knocks at my door" [it was one o'clock in the morning], "and was still more so when I recognised the voice of my peaceful neighbour, M. de Kercy" [a Frenchman and patriot who lived in the house]. "He cried out to me, '*Ouvrez! ouvrez! il faut que je vous embrasse!*' As I did not yield to this singular request, he cried out all the more, 'It is you who will want to embrace me yourself — open, open!' and at last I obeyed. M. de Kercy sprang towards me, crying, 'The tyrant is gone at last, Robespierre is dead!' and, to tell the truth, I immediately hugged him with all my heart. Next day we learned that the news of his death had produced quite a contrary effect on one of the most

violent of his partisans — and there were many in Holstein. One of these *profound politicians* was struck with such sorrow on hearing of his tragical end, that he instantly fell dead upon the spot."

In 1795 she left Altona and went to Hamburg. At "*Plock's*" she had written *Les Chevaliers du Cygne*, a tale of the court of Charlemagne, which she now sold; and during her stay at Hamburg she composed the *Précis de ma conduite pendant la Révolution*, which (she asserts) produced a powerful effect in her favour throughout Germany, although it does not appear that the stories which were told about her lost, in consequence, either narrators or listeners. Whilst at this place she parted with Henrietta Sercey, who was married to a M. Matthiessen, the son of a wealthy merchant. After the marriage Madame la Comtesse set out for Berlin, where we next find her domesticated with a Mademoiselle Bocquet, who kept a boarding-school in that city, and who "had received her with open arms." With her new admirer's aid she found a publisher for an already commenced novel, *Les Vœux Téméraires;* but no sooner was this done than, by the influence of the emigrants, the king was induced to believe that she was a most dangerous character, and in conse-

quence forbade her to remain in his dominions. "He would not banish her from his library," he is reported to have said, "but she must quit his territories." Her spirits, however, did not desert her. She shook the dust from her feet at the frontier with the following verses. The poor German officer who served as her escort, had been charged to obtain from her a written promise that she would not return to Prussia; she gave him these, which he took with the greatest simplicity: —

"*Malgré mon goût pour les voyages,*
Je promets, avec grand plaisir,
D'éviter, et même de fuir
Ce royaume dont les usages
N'invitent pas à revenir."

But she did not keep her promise. After an intervening period spent between Hamburg and Brevel she returned to Berlin. The king was dead; his successor had no objection to her either upon his shelves or elsewhere, and Mlle. Bocquet's arms were as open as before. The curious antipathy felt to her by the emigrants is very ungallantly evidenced in the succeeding extract: —

"My parlour had two doors, one opening into my room, the other upon a private staircase that led into the court, so that I had two ways

of getting out. Upon the landing-place was a door, facing mine, and leading to the room of an *émigré* who, Mademoiselle Bocquet told me, was of a very solitary temper, and knew no one in the house. I had received a present of two pots of fine hyacinths. As I dread the smell of flowers at night, and wished to leave my parlour-door open for the sake of fresh air, I took it into my head to put them out on the landing-place, between my neighbour's door and my own. The next morning I went to take in the flowers, and was disagreeably surprised at seeing my beautiful hyacinths cut into little pieces and scattered round the pots. I could easily guess that my emigrant neighbour was the author of this deed, which doubtless, in spite of French gallantry, the libels published against me had induced him to commit. As I did not wish to tell the incident that had occurred, I did not ask for any more hyacinths from those who had given me the others; but I told a servant to buy me some. She could not find any; but she brought me some other flowers with which I filled one of the pots, and pasted on it a slip of paper, upon which I wrote these words:—'*Tear up my works if you will, but respect those of God.*' In the evening before going to bed I put the pot upon the landing-place, and upon waking

the next morning was very curious to ascertain the fate of my flowers. I got up immediately to go and look, and found to my delight that the stranger had been satisfied with watering them. I immediately carried them into the parlour, and in placing them upon a table I perceived hanging from two of the flowers, two green threads, each bearing a beautiful little cornelian ring. The emigrant had been desirous of repairing the wrong he had done, and evidently knew that at this time I was forming a collection of cornelian trinkets; I had rings of cornelian, seals, hearts, little boxes, and the like. All my resentment vanished at this proceeding. The most singular thing was, that the *émigré* stopped at that, never wrote to me, did not ask to see me, and sent me no message. I imitated his discretion, and this was the first and last time we ever had anything to do with each other."

With this closes volume four of the *Memoirs*, which henceforward decrease greatly in interest. Nothing but the vow of poverty which she had made in exile can excuse such an excessive prodigality of *souvenirs*. Madame la Comtesse is far too kind. *De omnibus rebus* was just endurable; *de quibusdam aliis* is more than we can bear. Endless extracts from her own works, copious cuttings from the works of other people,

spiteful little scratches at shining reputations, details of petty quarrels, "*misères du monde parleur, du monde scribe;*" rambling discussions, "*à propos de bottes,*" and rare digressions to an eventless biography — these are the farrago of the remaining volumes, not luminous now, but voluminous, not fluent, but superfluous. The material, in fact, is mainly what, in the earlier portion, the prudent reader skipped or slumbered over — and life is too short for such interminable and irrelevant loquacity.

We shall take the liberty, therefore, of compressing into a few brief sentences the more material occurrences of the long period which lies between us and her death, contenting ourselves, for the rest, with the reproduction of such extracts as we have been able to glean from the records of her contemporaries. The friendship with Mlle. Bocquet having terminated in a quarrel, she remained at Berlin, supporting herself by writing, making trinkets, and taking pupils, until she was recalled to France under the Consulate. She came to Paris, bringing with her a child she had adopted in Prussia, Casimir Baecker, afterwards a celebrated harp-player, whose attachment to his benefactress must have been a considerable solace to the pupilless old lady. She was without personal property, and

had consequently but little to receive. Maradan, the bookseller, engaged her to write novels for a certain salary, and she published during the first years of the century her most perfect and popular works. From Napoleon she received a pension and rooms in the Arsenal. For this she was to write fortnightly letters to him upon general subjects — copious excerpts from which adorn the pages of the Memoirs. Other small pensions sufficed to place her beyond the reach of want — although she was never rich. Her energy, activity, and taste for writing continued unabated, until at last, one New Year's Day, a journalistic pen, preoccupied above all with the desire of being brilliant, recorded her death in the following words: — "*Madame de Genlis a cessé d' écrire; c'est annoncer sa mort.*"

Her society, we are informed by Madame la Comtesse de Bradi, a lady who knew her for the last thirty years of her life, was greatly sought after, but she made no effort to retain more than a small *coterie* of admirers. Upon the return of the Bourbons she lost the imperial assistance, but the Orleans family gave her the customary allowances as a quondam *Gouverneur* and *Gouvernante*. Faithful, however, to the vow of poverty which she had made at St. Amand, she gave away all that she possessed to

those about her. "Money from her pensions, presents from her pupils or her friends, everything was distributed as soon as received," and when she died a few worn and homely articles of furniture were all she left behind her.

In 1816 she was visited at Paris by that "wild Irish girl" who now sleeps calmly enough in the Brompton Cemetery below her shattered and stringless harp — Sydney, Lady Morgan. That lady was then writing those very volumes of *France* which so roused the malevolence of Mr. Croker against their witty Whig authoress. "*Elle s'est jetée dans la religion*," "she has shut herself up in a convent of *Capucines*," the gossips told her, when she inquired for the famous old countess. "It is impossible to see her, for she is invisible alike to friends and strangers." Nevertheless, Lady Morgan, to her delight, received an invitation to the Convent of Carmelites, in the Rue de Vaugirard, where Madame de Genlis was then domesticated. She found her in an "apartment that might have answered equally for the *oratory of a saint* or the *boudoir of a coquette*." Books lay scattered upon the table — a strange mixture of the sacred and profane; a great crucifix hung forward over the elegant Grecian couch of the Empire; chaplets and rosaries contended with her lute and her

paintings upon the wall — with blue silk draperies, white vases, and freshly-gathered flowers.

She was now seventy, but time had used her tenderly. An accident, indeed, had slightly injured the nose *à la Roxalane* which had been "so much celebrated in prose and verse, and which" — to use her own expression — "she had hitherto preserved intact in all its delicacy." The beautiful hands and feet that Madame de Bradi praises were, we presume, as beautiful as ever; the eyes were still full of life and expression; but the delicate features were worn and sharply marked, and the brilliant complexion which had been her greatest beauty had waned and faded. Yet "infirmity seemed to have spared the slight and emaciated figure," and beyond these "the traces of age were neither deep nor multiplied." She received her visitor "with a kindness and cordiality that had all the *naïveté* and freshness of youthful feeling and youthful vivacity. There was nothing of age in her address or conversation," says Lady Morgan, "and vigour, animation, a tone of decision, a rapidity of utterance spoke the full possession of every feeling and every faculty; and I found her in the midst of occupations and pursuits which might startle the industry of youth to undertake or to accomplish."

"When I entered her apartment she was painting flowers in a book, which she called her '*herbier sacré*,' in which she was copying all the plants mentioned in the Bible. She showed me another volume, which she had just finished, full of trophies and tasteful devices, which she called '*l'herbier de reconnaissance.*' 'But I have but little time for such idle amusements,' said she. She was, in fact, then engaged in abridging some ponderous tomes of French *mémoires*" [probably those of the Marquis de Dangeau], "in writing her *Journal de la Jeunesse*, and in preparing for the press her new novel, *Les Battuécas*, which has since" [in 1817] "been given to the world."

"Her harp was nevertheless well strung and tuned, her pianoforte covered with new music, and when I gave her her lute, to play for me, it did not require the drawing up of a single string. All was energy and occupation. It was impossible not to make some observation on such versatility of talent and variety of pursuits. 'Oh, this is nothing,' said Madame de Genlis, 'what I pride myself on is knowing *twenty trades, by all of which I could earn my bread.*'"

M. Barrière saw her in 1823, or two years before the publication of the *Memoirs*. The story is the same. She is still the "little lively old woman" of Moore. This time the sur-

roundings are hardly as elegant — the apartments a middling first-floor in the Place Royale. She was seated at a common deal table heaped with a pell-mell of articles from the breakfast and toilet table, the studio, the library, and the workshop — a miscellaneous *olla-podrida*, from which her visitor does not fail to draw its moral. Nevertheless, she did the honours of her hermitage "with the tone, the ease, the perfect amiability of a *femme du grande monde*." She praised the young lady visitor whom he had brought with him. She reminded her of her own youth, she said. "They will tell you," said the old countess, "that I was beautiful — very beautiful; don't believe them, it is not true — *mais j'étais excessivement jolie!*"

The last account which we shall cite (completing our claim to that first excellence of the biographer's art — the will to stand aside when better voices speak) is Mrs. Opie. The date is 1830. The Quaker authoress and painter's wife was staying at Paris. Her friend M. Moreau had invited the old countess to dine with him, and they went together to call upon and fetch her. "She received me kindly," says Mrs. Opie, "and I, throwing myself on my feelings, and remembering how much I owed her in the days of my childhood, became enthu-

siastically drawn towards her very soon. She is a really pretty old woman of eighty-seven" [eighty-four], "very uneffected, with nothing of smartness, or affected state or style, about her. We passed through her bedroom (in which hung a crucifix) to her *salon*, where she sat, much muffled up, over her wood fire; she had dined at three o'clock, not expecting to be able to go out, but, as the weather was fine, she soon consented to accompany us, but she laughing said she must now go without '*sa belle robe.*' We said in *any* gown she would be welcome; she then put on a very pretty white silk bonnet and a clean frill, and we set off. . . ."

The old countess said little at dinner, but nothing was lost upon her. There was a distinguished party present, who drank her health after a most flattering speech from their host. "I thought Madame de G. conducted herself on this occasion with much simple dignity; yet it was a proud moment for her. She murmured something (and looked at me) about wishing the health of Madame Opie to be drunk, but no one heard her but myself" [she was seated next her], "and I was really glad. When we rose from table, most of the gentlemen accompanied us. The room now filled with French, English, and Americans; many were presented to the

venerable countess, next to whom I sat, and then to me; she seemed to enjoy a scene to which for some time she had been a stranger. I found, while I was conversing on some interesting subjects, she had been observing me. Afterwards she said '*Je vous aime!*' she then added, with an archness of countenance and vivacity of manner, the remnant of her best days, '*je vous sême*' (imitating the bad pronunciation of some foreigner). At half-past ten I saw C. Moreau lead Madame de G. out, and I followed them, and paid her every attention in my power, for which she was grateful; when I had wrapped her up and put on her bonnet for her, my servant got a coach, and C. M., another gentleman, and myself conducted her home." This was on the 22d of November, 1830. On the 31st of December following the long life ended, and going to her in the morning, they found her dead in her bed.

We have now reached the term of a paper which has far exceeded its intended limits, but which, nevertheless, makes no kind of pretension to exhaustiveness. "*La Comtesse de Genlis dévoilée*" — to use the Abbé Mariotini's title — is still to be written. Much that has been said to her discredit bears so plainly the impress of personal or political animosity — is so manifestly

hostile and ill-natured, that any one, working upon the neutral ground of unbiassed biography, might safely hope to vindicate her from a great deal that has been urged against her. Unfortunately, Report is thousand-tongued, and her enemies were many; the records of her friends are few, their evidence meagre, and she has not mended the matter by the publication of her voluminous memoirs. Such a cloud of insincerity broods over her seemingly outspoken pages, such a crafty caution lurks behind her candour, she depreciates so insidiously, so disingenuously commends her friends and admirers, that one grows gradually to "believe herself against herself," to disallow her claim to clemency, to disregard her verities, and to doubt her pious protestations. Yet we should be far from styling her (as did a friend who looked over the memoirs) a "Joseph*ine* Surface." She is more histrion than hypocrite. The glare of the St. Aubin footlights never quite faded from her face; at no moment of her life was she utterly unconscious of the dress-circle and the stalls. Always upon a stage, the actress and the woman are so subtly intermingled, that it is difficult to tell which is uppermost — harder to separate the one from the other. Considering her in her different parts—as Comedian and School-

mistress," Prude, Pietist, and Politician — we are inclined to admire her most *en Pédagogue*. It is as the "Governor of Belle Chasse" that she will hold her place in the *répertoire*. Of her life, perhaps the last acts are the best. For the sake of those for whom, like Mrs. Opie and Lady Morgan, she is inseparably connected with the early associations of education, we willingly remember her indefatigable industry and untiring energy, her kindness to her relations and admirers, her courage and patience in exile and poverty. She had great talents, great perseverance, and a rare facility; less ambitious of social successes, less satisfied with contemporary praises, poorer and less prominently placed, she might have left an enduring name, or at least deserved a better epitaph than that of "*Toujours bien et jamais mieux*," with which Madame Guizot once cleverly characterised her productions.

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